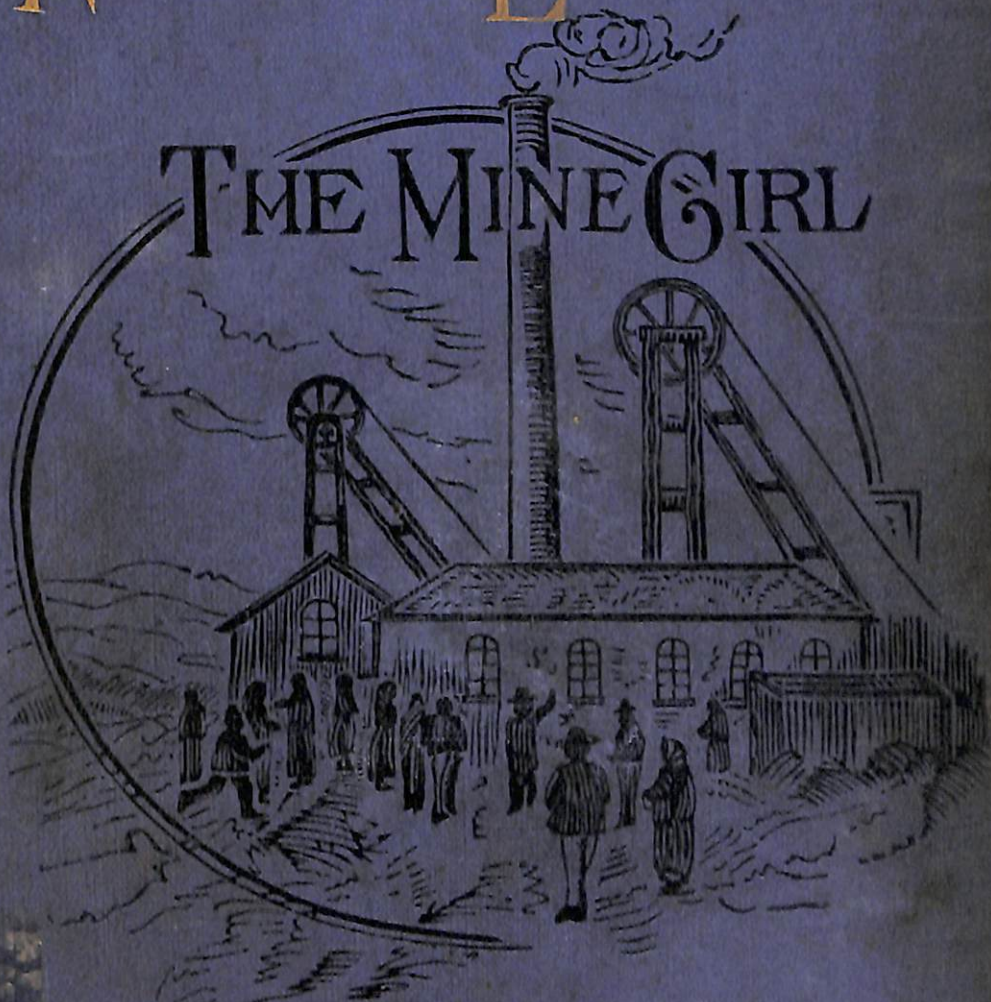


NORAM LANG.

THE MINE GIRL



BY SALOME MOCKING

AUTHOR OF GRANNY'S HERO, FORTUNES OF RIVERSIDE ETC.



"CAPTAIN PHIL LOOKED AT NORAH EAGERLY, AND TOOK ONE OF HER HANDS IN HIS."—See page 22.

NORAH LANG: THE MINE GIRL.

A Story of Village Life.

BY

SALOME HOCKING.

Author of "Granny's Hero," "The Fortunes of Riverside," etc.



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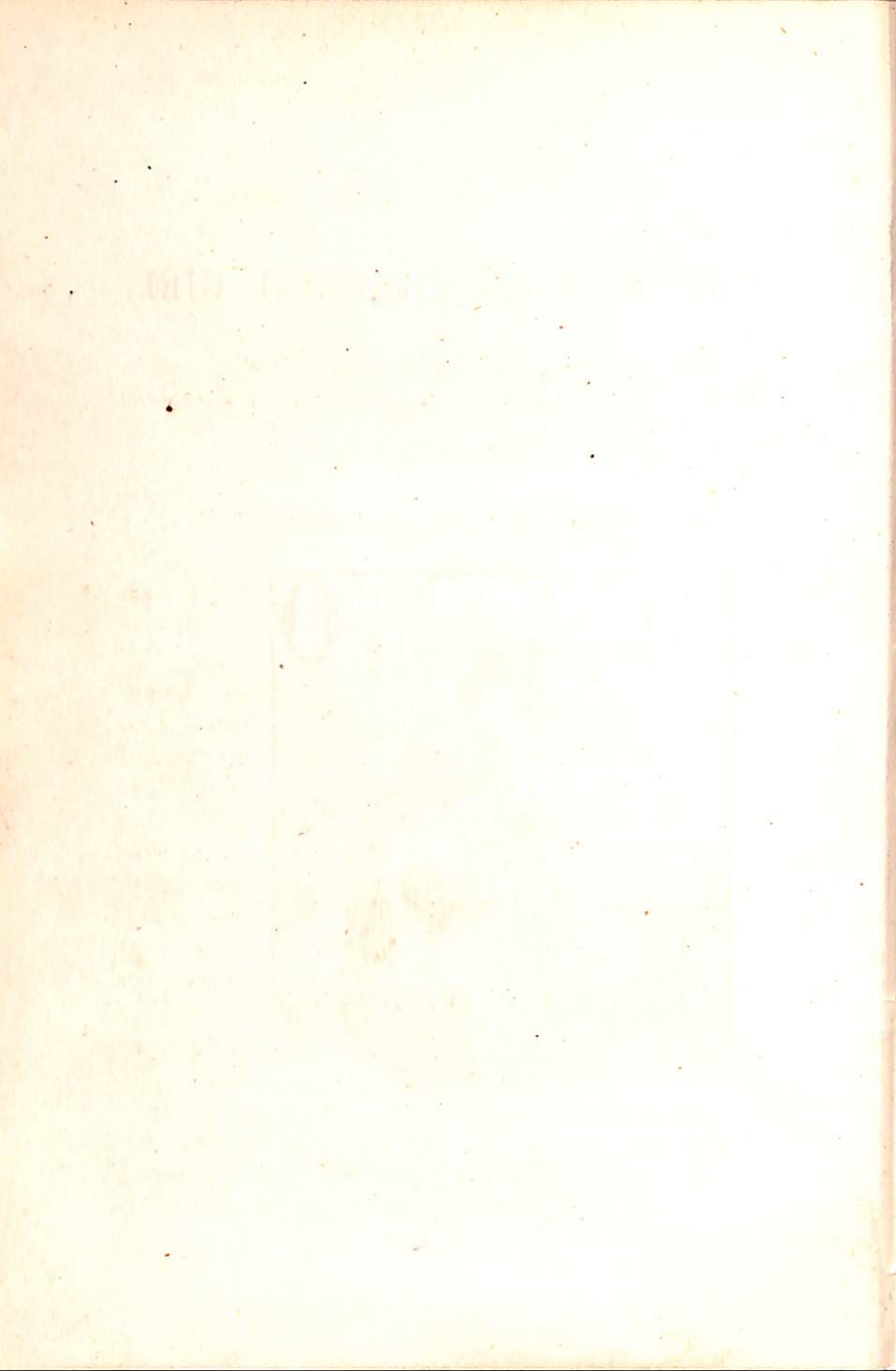
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Contents.



CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE MINER'S DAUGHTERS . . .	7
II. "IF YOU BID ME I WILL GO" . . .	19
III. FLIPSY'S DREAM	33
IV. CAPTAIN PHIL	46
V. TWO YEARS LATER	60
VI. THE REASON WHY	75
VII. TROUBLED TIMES	86
VIII. MR. NEWTON'S STORY	97
IX. DISAPPOINTMENT	107
X. TANGLED THREADS	118
XI. HOME AGAIN	129
XII. FLIPSY FULFILLS HER PROMISE	141
XIII. INTO THE LIGHT	151





NORAH LANG: THE MINE GIRL.

CHAPTER I.

The Miner's Daughters.



H! I wish Norah was come; it's so lonely here with no one but Judy. It is getting dark too, and raining. She is always at home other evenings before this time. Do you think there can be anything the matter, Judy?'

Judy responded by getting up, and rubbing her soft coat against her mistress's cheek, purring loudly all the time. It was the best answer she

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could make, and although Judy was but a cat, her loving sympathy, shown in cat fashion, was a great comfort to lonely little Philippa Lang; and as she stroked Judy's sleek coat with her thin white hand, she said fondly, "You're a great comfort to me, Judy. I don't know how I should get along without you."

Just as she had finished speaking, a young woman stepped quickly into the room. "Oh dear! I never had such a run in my life," she said, pantingly, as she took off her hat and fanned her hot cheeks. "I saw the rain coming," she continued, "and I've run all the way from Craddock. Dear me, I'm so warm."

"I wish *I* was," said Philippa, with a sigh and a slight shiver. "It has been so cold ever since the fire went out. But I don't care now that you are come, Norah."

"How long has the fire been out, darling?" asked Norah, as she lovingly kissed her sister's pale cheek.

"All the afternoon," answered Philippa, nestling closer in the loving arms that encircled her. "Mother went away just after dinner with Georgie, and they have not come back yet."

A shadow stole over Norah's face, but she only said quietly: "Never mind, dear, I will soon get a fire," and unclasping Philippa's arms from her neck she hastily set about kindling one.

When the fire had begun to burn brightly, and the untidy kitchen had been swept, Norah wheeled the sofa on which her sister was lying close to the



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grate ; and as she softly stroked the dark hair from Philippa's pale forehead, she said cheerily, "You will soon get warm now, little Flipsy."

A bright smile lit up Philippa's face, and holding out her thin hands before the blaze, she said :

"Wouldn't it be nice if you, and father, and me, and Judy could live by ourselves like we used to?"

Again that shadow stole over Norah's face, and without answering her sister's question she rose from her kneeling position, and, looking at the clock, she said :

"Father will be home soon ; he told me he should not work late to night ;" and then she added, more to herself than Philippa, "I wonder what his wife intends him to have for supper?"

"Bread and butter I expect," answered Philippa, with a slight smile, "there is nothing else in the house."

"A fine supper that for a man to sit down to, after working hard all day and eating a cold dinner," answered Norah, scornfully. And then changing her tone, she added gently, "It is well for him, and you too, dear, that I called at the butcher's shop on my way home ;" and putting on a clean apron, and rolling her sleeves back from her round fat arms, she was soon busy in cooking, what seemed to Philippa, a very desirable supper.

There are some people who have the knack of carrying themselves gracefully, no matter what they are doing ; and Norah Lang belonged to that fortunate class. She had the graceful, swan-like motion which often goes with lithe, willowy figures.

Norah was nineteen years of age, tall, and finely formed. Few people would have called her beautiful, but some of her friends declared that when she was excited, and her dark eyes sparkled and flashed, and her red lips parted, disclosing the white, even teeth, that she was positively handsome. But handsome or no, she had a fine face, such as is not often seen. Every feature denoted strength of character and firmness of will.

Her sister Philippa was a decided contrast to her, being small and hopelessly deformed. She was five years younger than Norah, and had no beauty to boast of except her rich, wavy brown hair. Their mother had died when Philippa (or Flipsy as she was generally called) was eight years old, and Norah had been as a mother to her little invalid sister ever since.

Twelve months before our story opens, William Lang had paid his addresses to a young and pretty widow, who was the mother of a boy about Flipsy's age. Norah had opposed the wedding with all the strength of her strong will ; but the widow's fair face, and smooth tongue, had been more than a match for Norah : and William Lang had brought home a stepmother to his children.

Mrs. Lang had not been kept in ignorance of Norah's opposition ; and when she came home, and while her husband was still fascinated by her pretty face, she had tried her best to get him to send Norah away, telling him that—

“One woman in a house is quite enough. Norah is very proud and impudent. I should feel that I



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was the mistress here if she was gone, but I don't now."

But to this William would not listen. "Norah has been the mistress of my house for years," he said. "She never has served under strangers, and she never shall if I can help it. Norah is a good girl, and I don't think she will cause you any trouble."

Seeing that William was firm, Mrs. Lang turned her attention to Norah, and there she had succeeded only too well ; for Norah was proud and independent, and it hurt her cruelly to be told by her father's wife that—

"William Lang cannot afford to maintain three women in idleness. There is Flipsy, nothing but a dead weight on his hands, and will never be anything else. She can't help that, it is true ; but when a strong, healthy young woman stays at home eating the bread of idleness, I think it is a burning shame. I never have been out to work, it is true, but since someone must help to maintain the family, and you are too much of a fine lady to work, I suppose I shall have to do it. But 'tis hard," and Mrs. Lang burst into a flood of tears.

Then Norah, whose patience was exhausted, turned on her stepmother her dark flashing eyes, and with cutting sarcasm said :

"I cannot see where the hardness would be, madam, for if my father had not been blind enough to marry *you*, you would have had to work to maintain yourself and boy. And had it not been for you, I should still be the mistress of this house.

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But my father has willed otherwise, and you are his wife, and as such you will receive nothing but respect from me, unless you forfeit that right by your own act. I do not wish to quarrel with you, and as I intend to get my own living, and shall not be home much, this will be easy. But there is one thing I would like to tell you for the first and last time; Philippa is her father's darling, and always has been; if you ill-treat her in any way I shall not hesitate to inform him of it, and then your reign will be short-lived; for though father is one of the quietest men on earth, yet if he is aroused his temper is like a mountain torrent that sweeps everything before it."

"All nonsense," Mrs. Lang had answered, with a scornful laugh, "I can turn your father as easily as I can snap my fingers at you," suiting the action to the word.

But though Mrs. Lang affected to scorn Norah's words, she took care not to give cause for complaint. Flipsy was not ill-treated in one sense of the word, but she was utterly neglected, while Georgie was jealously kept away from her sofa, Mrs. Lang declaring bitterly "That there were two fools already in the house who thought her an angel, but she would take care there should not be another."

This was hard for poor little Flipsy, for she had hoped that George's company would have helped to pass away the lonely hours she had to spend in Norah's absence.

When Norah resolved on earning her own living

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she was greatly perplexed what to do. She knew that her education was not such as would be required for teaching, so she had to chose between working at a mine or going into service. Had it not been for Flipsy she would have taken the place of housekeeper, which a widowed uncle had offered her, but she could not think of leaving poor helpless little Flipsy to the sole care of her stepmother. If she went to a mine, she would be able to carry her sister up and down stairs morning and evening, as usual, and would always be with her on Sundays.

It was a hard struggle for Norah to decide to work at a mine, for though only a miner's daughter, she had always been greatly respected in the village in which they lived, and envied by not a few ; and she knew that by being a mine girl she should fall in the estimation of a certain class of people. But Norah cared more for her sister than for the opinion of the people, and spite of her father's wishes to the contrary, she stuck to her resolution, and worked daily at the St. George mine for a living.

The week following the one in which our story opens, while Norah was busy at work, she noticed that the other girls on the "floors" were taking a rest. This was a general thing when the captain was out of sight, and Norah knew that at such times all the gossip would be retailed ; but, not feeling interested, she went on with her work. Had she known that she was the subject of their conversation that morning she might not have felt quite so indifferent.


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"Just look at Norah Lang, working away," said one, a good-looking girl with a fat rosy face. "No matter how many times we stop in a day, she never stops except to eat her crib (lunch) or dinner. I never saw such a girl in my life."

"Nor I either," answered the second girl, spitefully. "She does it just to vex us, and to keep in the cap'n's good graces."

"Oh, as for that now, if she wanted to vex us and do herself a good turn, she might have done it easily, long ago, by telling the cap'n how much time we waste," said the third girl, with a good-natured laugh.

"Well, you know, Bess, she did say that she thought we ought not to waste so much time, seeing that we are paid for our full time," answered the first girl.

"But what is the difference to her, or the cap'n either? They don't pay us. And the gentlemen who work the mine have money enough, gracious knows! and we might as well have some of the benefit of it as other people. But for my part I don't believe it's because Norah wants to be honest to her employers, as she puts it; it's because she doesn't want to stop and chat with us. She thinks she is a peg higher than us. But I should like to know why we aren't as good as she? Her father is nothing but a miner more than mine, and she has to work for her living the same as me."

This outburst was delivered by the second speaker, a spiteful looking girl, whose pretensions to beauty were of the most meagre description.

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"Come now, Emily, you are going too far," said the good-natured girl addressed as Bessy. "You know that if Norah is proud, she is never the one to speak ill of another; and see how kind she is to that little sister of hers. It's no wonder the child worships her. And I'm sure her class in Sunday-school love her more than any other teacher."

"It's all very well for *you* to praise Norah Lang," retorted Emily, meaningly. "She's been a good friend to you. It wasn't for your sake, though, that Ned Trezize turned teetotaler. He wouldn't have been going to marry you, if Norah would have had him; for his sister told me so."

"Ned's sister is like yourself, too fond of looking after other people's business," interposed the rosy-faced girl who had first spoken. "If you were not so fond of makin' mischief between people, you would have more friends." Then turning to Bessy, who had turned aside to hide her flushed cheeks and tear dimmed eyes, she said: "Don't you fret anything about it, Bessy; for Ned will make a better husband for having loved a good girl like Norah."

"Oh! I know it," answered Bessy, in a low voice. "Don't think I am jealous, Sissy, for I'm not. I know that loving Norah was the saving of Ned. Besides, he has got over his love for her long ago. He don't respect her more than I do, for the gentle, womanly way in which she told him she could not love him. If she had been as cold, and proud, as people say she is, and had turned him off, scornful like, she would have undone all the good

she had done. But she didn't, and I shall always like her for it."

"That's right, Bessy. I think very well of her myself; but I don't believe in working all the time like she do. Why, the gentlemen that work this mine are awfully rich, so they won't feel it if we do cheat them a little. But goodness gracious! there's the cap'n, but he ain't seen us, for one of the miners is talking to him. That's what I call lucky." And turning hastily to their "recks" (*i.e.*, a kind of table on which the tin is cleaned), they all began to work busily.

A few minutes later the "tin-dresser" came along, and said in low, mysterious tones: "I say, girls, have you heard any news this afternoon?"

The girls looked up from their work as the man spoke, and one of them answered, "No, what is it?"

"An accident, I'm afraid," said the man, solemnly.

"How? Where?" asked the girls, breathlessly.

"Well, it's like this," the man replied. "I overheard Josh Beel talking to the cap'n just now; and he said that some of the men came up to grass (surface) a little while ago, with some tools to be sharpened. They had just fired a hole before they comed away, and when they was comin' up they heerd the hole go off; or thought they did, but it must have been some other noise. After they had done their work, they went down again. But [they couldn't more than jist have got to the bottom,

when the hole went off sure nuff. It's spoased that the powder must 'ave been put in very tight. You girls are miners 'nuff to know what terrible accidents happen if ever men are near when a hole goes off. Great pieces of rock are flying round in every direction."

"What core men was it?" asked the girl called Bessy, eagerly.

"First," was the answer.

"First!" shrieked Bessy. "Then Ned is there. Oh, what shall I do!" and pushing aside the other girls, who were trying to restrain her, she started off towards a distant part of the mine.

"What is the matter with Bessy?" asked Norah as the girl ran past her.

"A accident among the first core men, and she thinks that Ned is there," answered Emily, with a shudder.

"What part of the mine?" asked Norah, quickly, turning to the man.

"North-east. 'Way over near the injin shaft," was the answer.

Norah's cheeks paled, and a look of terror settled on her face; and murmuring hoarsely "father," she turned and fled in the direction Bessy had gone.

"Poor girls!" said the man, hastily brushing his sleeve across his eyes. "God grant it may not be so bad as we think."

When Norah came to the shaft, where were gathered several men, she saw Bessy with her arms clasped around a stalwart young miner, who looked

rather embarrassed. When he saw Norah he groaned and whispered to Bessy :

“ Try not to look so happy, dear ; for there’s no doubt but that William Lang is a corpse, and here is Norah coming. Oh ! poor Norah.”





CHAPTER II.

"If you bid me I will go."

NORAH, at sight of Ned, ran to him and said breathlessly : "Oh, Ned, you are safe. Where is father? He was with you, wasn't he?"

"Yes," answered Ned, turning away his face to hide the tears that had sprung to his eyes.

"Why do you look away? Where is my father?" asked Norah, in high, excited tones.

"Well, Norah, I'll tell you all I know about it," said Ned. "You know, perhaps, that the blacksmith has been bad this week? Well, we have been putting off having our tools sharpened, till we could work with them no longer; so to-day we thought while the hole was going off, and the smoke clearing away, we would come up and sharp enough to last us for the rest of the core. After we had finished our job, your father took a part of the tools, and went down, while Tom and I went up to the cap'n's office for some candles and things. After that, Tom and I went down, and just as we got to the bottom of

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the ladders, we heard the hole go off, and we turned and came up as fast as we could; for we couldn't do anything if we had gone on, and should most likely have had our heads split open."

"And is *that* all you know?" asked Norah, in agonised tones.

"Yes. But here's Cap'n Phil and the man who went down with him." And turning, he asked, eagerly: "What is it like down there, cap'n?"

"The level has all run together," answered Captain Phil Trevathen, solemnly. "The hole you put off must have knocked down one of the pillars, which was supporting the ground; and now the place is choke full. It is impossible to render any assistance to anyone until the stuff is cleared away. Three men go down instantly, and commence to clear away. Work as hard as you can, and in two hours three others go down and relieve them." The three men pointed to, instantly sprang out, and walked towards the shaft.

"How long will it take them to clear it away?" asked Norah of Captain Phil.

"A day or two perhaps," answered Captain Phil, evasively.

"But if he is wounded, or hurt any way, he may be dead by that time," moaned Norah. "Why don't you send more men?"

"It would be useless, my poor girl," said Captain Phil, pityingly. "Only three men can work in that place at one time; any more would be a hindrance."

"Is there no other way that you could get to

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him, but through this level?" asked Norah, looking anxiously into Captain Phil's face.

He shook his head, and then, as if a sudden thought had struck him, he clasped his hand to his head with a quick gesture, and then turning to Ned Trezize, he said, hurriedly: "How long did Lang go down before you?"

"I don't know, Sir. Tom and I came up to your office, but William walked straight to the shaft."

"It would take you about ten minutes to walk to my office and back, so that he would be ten minutes ahead of you. That would give him full time to walk to the end of the level," finished Captain Phil, with a groan. And then as he saw how Norah shuddered at his last words, he said, more to cheer her than because he thought so, "Mightn't he have turned aside for anything, Ned? There is that old level, you know, which opens out into the old workings. He *might* have gone in there."

"Hi! yes," said Ned, excitedly, and relapsing into the Cornish dialect. "Why iss, I know that he left a candle there, and as we wasn't come, and his was gittin mighty short, he might 'a gone there for it. We put our tools that want to be sharpened in there out of the way sometimes."

"If that is the case he may have gone in there and as the explosion took place just after he had reached the end of the level—as near as we can judge—he may have been there at the time. We know he could not come out to this shaft, so his only way to surface would be through the old mine.

Now who among you is man enough to go through the old workings and see?" and Captain Phil turned his bright blue eyes towards the group of men standing there.

Not one responded, but stood looking at each other with consternation written on each face.

"Will no one go down to seek for my father? Have you no hearts, men?" asked Norah, in tones that made them quake.

"Iss we have," answered an old miner, sadly. "But the one who attempts to walk through that old mine, stares death in the face; for it 'as bin condemned as dangerous for over a year."

"And will you leave him down there to perish? Oh! I never thought that men, who are Cornish miners, would have left a man to die, while there was a way to save him."

"Neither will we, Norah; though it *be* almost certain death for us. It wouldn't be much like Cornishmen if we did," said another man, whose face had flushed hotly at Norah's words.

"But who among us must go?" asked the miner who had spoken first. "Not men who have wives and little children dependin' on them; for we have widows and orphans 'nuff already." And walking away a few steps from Norah, the men conversed in low, eager tones.

Turning to Captain Phil, Norah said appealingly: "Is there nothing to be done? Oh! I wish I knew the way through that old mine. I would soon find my father."

Captain Phil looked at Norah eagerly, and tak-

ing one of her hands in his he said, in low, excited tones: "Norah, I know the way, and if you bid me I will go and search for your father."

"Will you? Oh, then go quickly, Captain Phil," replied Norah, with something like hope lighting up her face.

"You heard what the men said just now, Norah, that anyone who went might look death in the face? Well, that is perfectly true, but for your sake I will do so."

"God bless you, Captain Phil," said Norah, in trembling tones.

"Thank you, Norah; but before I go I should like to ask you one favour."

"Ask what you like," answered Norah, quickly.

"May I?" asked Captain Phil, eagerly. "Then I will ask you if I should come back alive to be my wife. Will you, Norah? You must know how long I have loved you."

"Yes! yes! I will do anything, be anything, only bring back my father; for Flipsy would die if father was—" and, breaking off suddenly, Norah, for the first time, burst into a flood of tears.

"If he is alive, I will bring him back to you," was Captain Phil's answer. And hastily lifting Norah's hand to his lips, he joined the group of men, and in a clear, ringing voice, said:

"I am going through the old mine to search for William Lang. Who among you is man enough to join me?"

Again there was silence, and, looking straight at them, Captain Phil said: "I would go alone, but

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should he be injured, I should not be able to bring him to surface without help. Now who will go? Don't all of you speak at one time."

For a minute no one spoke, and then Ned Trezize said in a low voice: "I will go with you, cap'n."

"No, no," screamed Bessy, "I have only just got over the fright of your being killed. Don't go, Ned."

Ned laughed, and said kindly, "How many times do you think I can die, Bessy?" and then stooping, he whispered, "God will take care of me, for I am doing my duty." And gently loosening her clinging grasp, he walked away after Captain Phil.

Hour after hour those left behind waited there, talking anxiously one with another; and every few minutes gazing eagerly at the spot where their captain and Ned had disappeared. Norah and Bessy had seated themselves side by side on the ground, and each kept her gaze fixed on the old shaft.

Four hours had passed away when both girls rose to their feet as if with one accord, and Bessy was about to scream with delight as she saw Ned's head appear, when Norah placed her hand over Bessy's mouth, and said in a fierce whisper: "Don't you dare to speak until they are on firm ground."

Three minutes later, and William Lang was seen walking towards the "office" between Captain Phil and Ned Trezize. The men set up a great shout, and as they ran towards them, each one commenced asking questions.



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"Not now. Wait until he has been in my office and rested a bit," said Captain Phil. "He's a good deal shaken, and has had a fall, and been faint."

After about half an hour, William declared himself to be rested ; and, sitting in Captain Phil's chair, he commenced his narrative in the following words :—

"You most of you know, I suppose, that just after I got down, the hole went off?"

"Yes, yes, we know," they answered, and William continued,

"I always did believe in Providence, but now I shall be a firmer believer than ever ; for when I got into the level, I found that the bit of candle I had was nearly gone ; so I went into the old level for one I had left there, and I had no sooner laid my hand on that candle, when I heard the report. I knew I was safe from the flying rocks and stones, so I stayed there and thanked God, although I am not a religious man. But I tell you, mates, when you see yourself saved from death by a miracle, as it were, you cannot help thanking somebody, and God was the only one near me.

"But to get on with my story. When I thought the smoke had cleared away a bit, I thought I would come out and tell my mates that I was safe. But what a sight met my view. Excepting a little space around the mouth of the old level where I was standing, the ground had all run together. My heart seemed to stop beating, for there I was, buried alive. I knew it would take



days to clear away the stuff, and without food or water how could I live all that time? That was an awful moment. And then I remembered that there was a way out through the old workings; but which would be the worst, to stay there and wait for help, or go through the old mine, I knew not.

"After a long time considering, I determined that I would risk the old mine. I had a candle (all my fate seemed to hang on that one candle), and if the way were impassable, I had still the chance of going back, and waiting for deliverance. So I took a pick with me, and walked on till I came to the old shaft. The ladders there were still good, so I got down all right. It was well I took my pick with me, for the next level was almost impassable, and I had to dig away the stuff to pass through. My candle held out until I came to the 200 fathom shaft, which I had to ascend to get to the next plat, and then it flickered up, and spluttered in the grease and clay and went out. But not before I had seen what extinguished all my hope, and made the cold drops of sweat come out over my face. I saw that the ladder further up than I could reach had rotted, and fallen away in bits.

"All my courage left me, for I was in a worse place than I had been before. I could not go on, neither could I go back without a light. Despair seized hold of me, and I felt as if I should go mad, and when I saw something white shining on me in the darkness, I was too dazed to remember that

rotten timber shines in the dark, and turning to run away from it, I struck myself against the side, and I knew no more until I heard Captain Phil's voice.

"I can tell you that after all I had passed through, no angel's voice could have sounded sweeter in my ears."

Breathless silence reigned in the room while William Lang was talking, and when he had finished, and Captain Phil saw how anxiously Norah turned her eyes towards him, he took up the tale, and said :

"Fortunately, I had sufficient presence of mind to take a rope with me, for I knew that all the ladders with the exception of the ones William has mentioned were old, and would most likely be rotten. So when I came to a place where there was no stave to put my feet on, I handed up the rope to Ned, and bade him fasten it to a place where the ladder seemed pretty firm, and when that was done, I took hold of the rope, and lowered myself to the bottom. The first thing I saw, when I cast my light around, was William curled up in a faint. I called to Ned, and we soon got him around, and I can assure you that he was glad to see us, and we him.

"After awhile he declared himself able to climb the ladders, but what I was afraid of was that he was not strong enough to ascend the rope, but I suppose it comes easier to a miner or a sailor than any other man, so he went up slowly but surely, hand over hand, until we got to the next plat.

"If any of you would like to face danger, go through that old mine. We waded through water some places up to our waists, and at other times we had to crawl through a small aperture on our hands and knees. Had we lost our presence of mind, or forgotten the way and turned aside, we should have found ourselves in a shaft 200 fathoms deep. But I knew the old mine like a book, and here we are all safe, but a good deal shaken."

As Captain Phil finished his story, he turned to Norah, and catching the look of deep gratitude that she cast on him, he felt amply rewarded for his bravery, and then turning toward the men with a pleased smile on his face, he said pleasantly,—

"Now, boys, you had better go about your work. Ned, you can change your clothes and go home, you need a rest, after all this excitement. I will help William home as soon as we have got off our wet rags."

Then turning to Norah, he said quietly :  
"Norah, your father may want you at home this afternoon. I will make it right with Captain Williams."

A few minutes after, and the three who had so strangely influenced each other that day were slowly wending their way to William Lang's cottage.

It was not till the house was shut up for the night, and Flipsy was in bed fast asleep, that Norah had time to think of the promise she had given.

All the afternoon and evening, people had been



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dropping in to hear the news. It had spread through St. Orme like wildfire, that William Lang had escaped being buried alive, and then had *walked through the old mine*. This last was considered the greater wonder of the two ; for since the old workings had been abandoned as dangerous, several men having been killed there, no one had since entered it. And it had been given over to the ghosts of the dead, who it was reported walked up and down the "levels," making the most doleful noises. One old miner declared, that once when he was walking by the mouth of an old shaft, that he heard the faint sounds of a pick, as it tapped against a steel borer. And as Norah heard the tale repeated that evening, she had a suspicion that this, more than the danger, had made the men afraid of entering the old mine.

But now all the people had left, and Norah, with her hands pressed to her head, sat thinking of Captain Phil, and the promise she had made him that day. She had known for some time that Captain Phil loved her, but she had not thought of marrying him, for he was neither a Christian nor a teetotaler ; and Norah had seen with regret, how many of her friends had fallen away from the faith by marrying men who were not Christians. She had always hoped that when she married, she should have some one who would help, and not be a hindrance to her in her Christian life ; but Captain Phil was an unbeliever in the broadest sense of the word. He was also unlike her ideal of what her lover should be, for Norah, like many another

girl, had dreamed her dreams, and had settled in her mind what that favoured one must be like. Certainly he would be altogether unlike Captain Phil, who cared more for wrestling, cricketing, and hunting, than for all the books that were ever written.

But the imaginary, however dear, must give way to reality, and so Norah found. She had promised to be Phil Trevathen's wife, and she must be true to her promise. Her day dreams must be thrown aside, for it would be worse than folly to recall them now. And as Norah sat at her window, and gazed out into the starlight, she weighed the matter over carefully, and came to the conclusion that matters "might not be so very bad after all." And she decided that she would try to love Captain Phil, and as he was a general favourite with the girls around, she judged that it would not be a very difficult task.

It was true, if she had only to consult her own feelings, she would have refused him, and have waited till the ideal of her dreams appeared on the scene. But Phil had risked his life for her sake, and he should have his reward. She had never seen anyone that she liked better, and very likely her dreams had been all folly, there was no such a creature as she had imagined. And looking at it from a worldly standpoint, Phil was above her by birth and position. His father was part owner and manager of a mine, while his grandfather had been the sole owner of a very rich mine. To be sure, he had thrown his riches away in drink and fast

living, and Phil was none the better off for having a rich grandfather. But the Trevathens had always been respected in the parish, and Phil was free to enter into its best society.

Thus Norah communed with herself, and tried to put all her objections aside, and look at her promise in its best light. But when a girl argues with herself, and tries to persuade herself that it is all right, and the best thing she can do, if the subject is matrimony, it is a moral certainty that her inclinations do not run with her judgment.

Norah's heart was still sleeping, and she hoped that because it slept, and made no protest, that she could give it to the man to whom in honour she was bound. Norah felt quite calm as she sat there, settling her destiny as she supposed. The only thing that ruffled the calm at all, was that Captain Phil, like a good many of his ancestors, loved "the cup which intoxicates." But even that did not disturb her much, for she thought that the man who would risk his life at her bidding, would give up such a small thing as *drink*, for the sake of her whom he professed to love with such fervour.

Poor blind Norah! Little did she guess how lightly men weigh woman's love, when put in the balance against their own inclinations and desires.

Captain Phil's meditations were altogether different from Norah's that evening. He had no doubts to settle, or points to argue. As a boy he had admired Norah Lang more than any other girl at school; for she was fearless of danger, and could run and play cricket almost as well as a

boy. Those were great accomplishments in Phil's eyes, and when her mother died, and she left school and kept house for her father, she still held the first place in his heart. But when William Lang married again, and Norah went to mine to work, because she would not leave her invalid sister, Phil declared to himself that she was the "pluckiest" girl he had ever seen. And from that day, up to the time of which we write, he had worshipped her with all the ardour of a young man's first love.

For some time, Captain Phil had been a little out of heart, for Norah had kept aloof, and had given him no encouragement whatever, and in his downheartedness he had too often sought to raise his spirits with *spirit* of another kind. But now he felt like a victor, for at one bold leap he had gained the prize which he had so long coveted.

When a man worships at two shrines, one is apt to be neglected ; and so when Captain Phil's love was successful, he forsook the wine cup, and gave himself up to the pleasing task of providing pleasure for his intended bride. And Norah, hearing on every side of the improvement in her lover, thought there was no need to ask him to forsake what he seemed to have already forsaken ; and thus everything went on smoothly between them.

Norah could not help feeling a little proud of the attentions she received from Captain Phil. It was also very pleasant to have some one who studied her wishes as he did ; and it seemed very likely that Norah's great liking for her kind-hearted, good-looking lover would ripen into love.

CHAPTER III.

Flipsy's Dream.



NE breezy afternoon in the early part of September, as Flipsy was lying on her sofa almost asleep, with Judy curled up on her lap, sleeping peacefully, they were both startled by

Georgie suddenly rushing into the house, and throwing his books on the table with a bang.

"What is the matter?" asked Flipsy, rubbing her eyes and staring at him.

"Oh, nothin'," answered George, with a laugh. "Only master's going to town this afternoon, and we've got a 'oliday. My! we're going to have a jolly time of it, too."

“What are you going to do?” asked Flipsy, quietly.

“Oh, we’re all going off for a spree. The boys will pick nuts, and the girls blackberries. I guess they won’t carry many blackberries home.”

Flipsy sat quiet for some time, and then looking at George wistfully, she said :

“The girls will go the same places that you will, I suppose?”

“Of course,” said George, importantly, “they’d be ’fraid of their lives of the adders, if *we* weren’t with them.”

“Oh, dear, I wish I was able to go,” burst out Flipsy, with a great sigh, as she looked longingly out of the window.

“So you can. I’ll wheel you in that new chair father bought for you. It will do you heaps of good to be out. I heard Norah say she should take you out every day if she was home.”

“Yes, I know it would do me good, and I should dearly love to go ; but what would mother say if I went?”

“Dunno,” answered George. “Where is she?”

“Gone to the well for water. I wonder if I asked her if she would let me?” Then after a pause, Flipsy added wistfully, “She doesn’t like you to do anything for me, but I do wish she’d let me go with you to-day, but I am awfully afraid she won’t.”

“I have it,” shouted George. “I know of a dodge to fix her. Just you keep quiet, Flipsy, and

I'll manage it. Here she is" (in a whisper as he saw his mother entering the gate).

"I say, mother," he began, as soon as she had dropped her pitcher of water. "Have you heard the news?"

"No. What news?" asked Mrs. Lang, eagerly.

"Why, Angelina Williams is going to be married next week."

"You don't mane it. Why, I never heard that she had a sweetheart," said Mrs. Lang, in astonishment.

"No, it's a great secret," answered George, as grave as a judge. "She got engaged that time she went to London. He's comin' home to-night by the last train."

"Well, I never, that *is* news," said Mrs. Lang, with a pleased smile.

"Yes, but you mustn't tell anyone about it," said George, giving Flipsy a sly wink.

"Of course not," answered Mrs. Lang, absently. And then, smoothing her rough hair with her hands, she said: "I am going out for a few minutes, I'll be back again directly."

"Hurrah," said George, when his mother was gone, "I knew I could fix her." And he flung his cap up to the ceiling, and deftly caught it on his toe, and then, bursting into a ringing laugh, he said, "I knew mother couldn't keep a secret like that for long. I'll bet she won't come back until she's told every woman in the village. And she'll tell each one to be sure and not tell any one." And George laughed again; and catching up Judy

he threw her up in the air, and caught her by the tail as she was coming down. Judy did not seem to like such rough play, and, wrathfully shaking the injured member, she left the room.

"Now then, Flipsy, we must be off," said George, turning his laughing eyes on the little invalid's pale face. "I'll get out your carriage."

"Yes, but, George," objected Flipsy, "I can't go like this. I must have something to wear."

"Of course you must. Where are the togs to be found?"

"Up in the middle drawer in Norah's room. Bring my hat, and that white shawl she knitted for me."

"All right, my lady. I'm yer Moses," shouted George, as he sprang up the stairs.

Five minutes later, and Flipsy, seated in her bath chair, her face wreathed in smiles, was wheeled out of the village. Very soon they were joined by a party of children, whose ages ranged from the child of three, led by its older sister, to the lad of fourteen. After greetings had been exchanged with Flipsy, the question was asked, "Where shall we go?"

"Let's go on top of Prospect Hill, and then go in the old Squire's wood. There's heaps and heaps of nuts and blackberries there," said one of the biggest boys.

"Ay, but 'spoase he should catch us?" suggested another.

"That's all right," said a mischievous looking youngster. "I saw old vinegar face go on to

market just afore I come here, so we are free from him. And if Maaster Bill should see us, he won't say nothing. He isn't a bit like his stingy old father."

To Prospect Hill they climbed, with many shouts and much laughter; the boys taking it in turn to push Flipsy's chair. How she enjoyed it all. The happy shouts of the boys, and the merry laughter of the girls; and as she felt the wind blowing on her face, and floating her hair about, she laughed as merrily as any child there. For once she felt as a child should, light-hearted and gay; and when they reached the top of the hill, and she could see the country for miles around, the flush that the wind had given to her cheeks deepened, and with a happy light in her eyes, she said to George, who was standing by the side of her chair: "I believe I should get strong if I could always live up on a hill, for I never felt so well before in my life."

George laughed, and said: "It's all very well now in the summer, but just you come up here in the winter, and feel the hailstones smacking around your face, and the wind blowin' like sixty, 'nuff to cut your nose off. Yoa'd tell another tale then."

"Perhaps I should," answered Flipsy, with a soft little sigh. "I only wish I was strong enough to come up here in the winter, I would gladly brave the cold."

"Now then, look alive there; the nuts won't come to meet us," shouted one of the boys.

"Off we goes then," answered George, spring-


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ing behind Flipsy's chair and moving on at a quick pace.

Soon they left the road and entered the grand old wood. The brushwood had been cleared away a sufficient width for a horse and cart to pass through, but apart from this road, the wood had been allowed to retain all its wild beauty undisturbed. Overhead waved the oak and the sycamore, their branches intermingling, and making a thick covering of green leaves. Here and there patches of blue sky were visible, and occasionally a sunbeam would dart its quivering light in amongst the leaves, lighting everything up with a bright rich glow. The floor below had also a beauty of its own, the ground being covered with a waving feathery carpet of ferns. But here a touch of decay was visible. Patches of brown and yellow might be seen among the ferns that a week before had looked as green as in the early spring-time. But the commingling of colours added to the beauty of the scene, and as Flipsy's gaze wandered around she exclaimed: "How lovely," and then relapsed into silence.

The rest of the children, however, cared nothing for the scene, the boys rushing through at a rapid rate to find the nuts that grew a little further on.

"I will stay here a little while, George, please," said Flipsy, turning her head a little towards him; "you can come back for me when you have gathered your nuts."

"All right," was the ready answer, as George sprang away after the others, and soon their shouts

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had died away, and Flipsy (as she had desired) was alone with nature.

Poor little invalid Flipsy had never been very far from her own home, and this was her first visit to the interior of a wood. It seemed to her, as she sat there and looked at the swaying branches of the trees, and listened to the wind as it rose and fell, that it must be talking to the trees. First it would come like a soft whisper of love, and the gently stirred leaves seemed to be answering back; then its voice would become louder and louder, until it rushed through the whole army of trees, like the sound of a monstrous wave on the sea-shore.

Strange thoughts floated through Flipsy's mind as she sat there listening to the story that the wind told the trees that afternoon. For her imagination supplied the story; and in listening to it she forgot that she was an invalid. The wood which she was in grew into a city, the trees were people who talked to her, and praised her for her beauty and accomplishments, and offered her a place among them. Her carriage was turned into a palace which ran on wheels, and she, beautiful and rich, felt like a princess in a fairy tale.

"I say, Flipsy, you've fallen asleep."

Flipsy woke up to find that the wood was not a city, the trees were not people, while she was still an invalid, with George waiting to wheel her out of that enchanted spot.

"Oh, George," she said with a sigh, "I've had such a beautiful dream. I'm almost sorry you waked me, for I was never so happy in my life."

"Sorry!" echoed George, "and I was expecting a scolding for not coming before. I found such a heap of nuts that I forgot all about you. But come the sun is going down, and we must be going home." And very soon they had left the wood that was almost dark, and came out again a little further on, into the still warm and sunny valley.

Flipsy was very quiet all the way home, and all through the evening. Her father noticed it, and laying his hard hand on her silky hair, he asked lovingly: "What is the matter with my little lame pet to-night? Didn't you like being out this afternoon?"

"Yes, I liked it dearly, I was never so happy in my life, I would like to go into that wood again; but I would like to be strong enough to walk there by myself whenever I liked. Father, why did God make me a cripple?"

William shook his head, and in a husky voice answered: "I don't know, darling."

"I dreamed this afternoon that I was well, and strong, and beautiful, and oh, I was so happy, for everybody loved me; and I've been wishing ever since that my dream would come true. But it never will." And there was a kind of a sob in Flipsy's voice as she finished.

"But nearly every one that knows you loves you now, my darling. Your being a cripple doesn't make people love you less," said William tenderly.

"Yes, but it's a love that grows out of pity. If I had been well and as ugly as I am now, no one would love me. Norah is well and handsome, but

I am ugly and a cripple, why is it so? Everything that I have seen to-day has been beautiful. The trees, the flowers, and fruit. God has made it all beautiful. I wonder why He made me so ugly?"

"Why, Philippa, my child, what has come over you to-night? You have always been so sweet and patient; I never heard you talk like this before."

"No, for I never heard the wind talking to the trees before. I have been contented with my lot, because I knew nothing better. But there in the wood this afternoon, I had a dream of a life that is more beautiful and satisfying than mine is: of a place where I could take my place among beautiful people as an equal, and it makes me sad to be a poor, ugly little cripple again."

"Oh, that's not a bit of difference," said George looking up from his books. "Most clever people are ugly, and maybe you are one of the clever ones. I reckon you are, for you've been talking like a passon to-night. And if so, people will make much of you, and respect you very much more than if you were beautiful and a softy."

"That's right, George Sharpe," said Norah, laughing; "I verily believe you are getting as *sharp* as your name."

"If that is so, I shall be a regular *sharper* soon," said George, with a low chuckle. "Flipsy, I'll take you for my pupil, you'll soon be clever then."

"Be as sharp as you like, but don't go trying to alter Flipsy, for we don't want any change in our little invalid," said Norah, with a fond glance at her sister's sorrowful little face.

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"Oh, don't say that, Norah. You don't know how sad it is to lie here on this sofa from January to December, never knowing what it is to be able to walk out among the birds and flowers. And I never shall now, I never shall," and with this despairing wail, Flipsy buried her face in the cushions, and gave way to a passion of tears.

William stroked her hair and called her pet names, while Norah tried to comfort the little sobbing creature with whispered promises of future amusements ; but it was the click of the gate, and the sound of Mrs. Lang's footsteps, that stopped the weeping. And hastily drying her tears she said, tremulously :

"I am tired now, I will go to bed. Good night, daddy," and as he stooped to give her his good-night kiss, the white face was laid lovingly against his, and Flipsy whispered, "Don't fret, dear, I shall be better by to-morrow."

The next day she seemed her old self again, quiet and content, and no one noticed any difference in her. And when a few days after, she asked George to tell her what he studied at school, and expressed a wish to learn the same things, he only thought that she was tired of lying on the sofa all day doing nothing, and he willingly lent her his books, and explained to her whatever seemed difficult or intricate.

Flipsy had no definite idea herself of what she wished to do, but George's random words had taken root, and as she lay on the sofa day after day, puzzling over them, she had made up her mind

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that as she could not be beautiful, she would be clever. She would make the best of her life. And so instead of spending the time, when she was free from pain, in vague, idle dreams of what *might* be, and in building impossible castles in the air, she practically set about laying the foundation of something possible. In other words, she tried what so many of limited means have tried before her, of educating herself. Not but that William would have sent her to school had her health permitted, and as it was Norah had tried to teach her, but she had complained that it made her back worse to stoop over books. But now she worked industriously day by day, fighting hard against her indolent nature, and each day she advanced a step further on the road to knowledge.

Captain Phil, who was a frequent visitor at William Lang's cottage in those days, took a great interest in Flipsy. At first he had noticed her because he saw that it pleased Norah, but after awhile he learned to like her for her own sake, and often brought little presents of fruit or flowers to her. And when her fifteenth birthday came, he brought her a diary. As he gave it to her he said laughingly :

" I saw so many books in the shop, Flipsy, that I was bewildered. I didn't know at all what you would like, you are such an old-fashioned kind of a child you know. So when I saw this diary I determined to put an end to my perplexities by buying it. Now you can write a story to suit yourself, and when it is full I will buy you another."

"Thank you very much, Captain Phil," said Flipsy, gratefully. "It is the first birthday present I have ever had. It is so good of you to remember me."

"Is it? Well then if you think so, be sure not to forget *me* even if I should ever be far way."

"That I won't," said Flipsy, warmly, "and I will love you always, Captain Phil."

"I wish your sister had said that," thought Phil. Aloud he said, "But suppose, Flipsy, that some day I should do wrong, and people turned their backs on me, wouldn't you turn against me also?"

"I think not," was the gravely spoken answer. "That would not be the way to lead you back into the right way again; and that is what I should want to do, Captain Phil."

"You kind-hearted little thing, that is just like you. Then if ever I go wrong, I may come to you for sympathy?"

"Yes. But I hope you will keep right, Captain Phil, for your own sake as well as Norah's."

"Yes, I hope so, and I mean to," said Phil, thoughtfully. And then as Norah came into the room he added gaily, "Remember your promise, little peacemaker. Some day you may have to put it into practice."

"And if that time should ever come, I will be true to my word." Words lightly spoken, but destined to be remembered by both, in a way they neither of them thought of then.

A few minutes later, Flipsy was listening with

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pleasure to Captain Phil's voice as he sang while Norah accompanied him on the harmonium.

"I wonder if he will always love Norah as much as he does now?" thought Flipsy, as through the open door she looked at Captain Phil as he stood at Norah's side, with one arm thrown lightly around her neck, his fingers occasionally caressing her cheek, his blue eyes flashing and his rich voice ringing out passionately as he sung the last verse of the song :

"We parted by the riverside,  
And I have roamed in many a clime ;  
My heart has not forgot its pride,  
For I have loved you all the time.  
And I am faithful to you still,  
While I believe you true ;  
Afar or near, or come what will,  
I love *you*, only *you*."

Years after, in another place, and under entirely different circumstances, Flipsy remembered that scene, and was answered.





## CHAPTER IV.

### Captain Phil.

**C**APTAIN PHIL was passionately fond of music, and so was Norah. It was one thing in common which they shared together. Often when they had been sitting alone, and Norah felt woefully tired of her lover's conversation and his passionate love making, and would wish that their tastes were more alike, she would turn to the harmonium with a feeling of relief. She was never tired of hearing Phil sing, and at such times she grew reconciled to her lot. It was a link which bound them together. Norah was proud of her lover's voice, proud of his good-looking face and stalwart form; and honestly strove to love him.

One evening, about twelve months after they had become engaged, Captain Phil said:

"There is a nice little house to be let up at the other end of the village, Norah; it would just suit us. May I take it?"

No, indeed, Phil," answered Norah, quickly.



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'I am too young to be married yet. Wait until I am twenty-one.'

"A year longer," said Phil, grumblingly. "What in the world do you want to wait so long for, Norah?"

"Do you call a year long? Then what do you think of the forty or fifty years we shall have to spend together, putting up with my faults and failings? For marriage will not prove to be all happiness."

"I wonder how much you know about it?" asked Captain Phil, with a laugh.

"Not much perhaps," answered Norah, smilingly. "But I rather think that some of our married friends would hail a year of single blessedness again with delight. You ought to be thankful that I am willing to keep you out of misery a year longer."

"Keep me in it you mean," corrected Phil. "Well, I suppose I shall survive."

"I *suppose* you will," said Norah, laughing heartily. "And very likely thank me for being so wise."

"I may," said Phil, making a wry face, "but I don't feel very thankful that you are so wise—as you term it—now. But, Norah," and Phil spoke gravely, "if you won't be married, you must leave off going to mine. I don't like my wife slaving there."

"I wonder how long I have been your wife?" asked Norah, playfully.

"Never mind about that now. I suppose I

may call my intended wife what I like. But, Norah, my aunt, who you know has been a second mother to me, thinks it is not just the thing for you to go on at the mine. So if you will not get married, I must insist on your staying at home. I will give you more than you get there, so that you need not be taunted by your stepmother."

"That is just what I should be," answered Norah, with a strange glitter in her eyes, "although that consideration has no weight with me. For, Phil, I cannot consent to accept money from you while I am Norah Lang. And as I have no intention of receiving anything from my father's wife, I shall go on at the mine."

"Well then, Norah, you will have to give your consent to our wedding, for I don't like the idea of my friends looking down on you. And if we love each other, I can see no reason for waiting. Now, darling, be reasonable."

"I try to be," answered Norah, dryly. "I am sorry your friends look down on me. It is a pity but that you had taken up with some one more to their liking."

"Don't talk like that, Norah. You know I could never love anyone else," said Phil, fondly, "It is because I love you so well that I would marry you, and place you on a level with my friends."

"And I am not now, I suppose," asked Norah quickly. And then she added bitterly, "Oh, no! my father is a miner, and I am a mine girl, and because of that, your cousin Julia thinks that I

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should 'mix with servants, and not aspire to the ranks of my betters.' "

"Julia is a simpleton," said Phil, savagely. "She is only jealous of you because you are a heap handsomer than she is."

"She is partly right for all that," said Norah, with a hard laugh. "Why should I not keep down to my own level? Norah Lang, the mine girl, has no right to expect to be treated like a gentleman farmer's daughter. As Julia says, 'I have no right to learn music, or read poetry. I had better keep to housework, and knitting stockings,' which, by the way, she pronounces without any g's."

"Julia again. You shouldn't take up such nonsense, Norah. You are awfully proud and sensitive."

"And I ought not to be? Poor people have no right to be sensitive. That is a luxury reserved for the rich? I know it. But, Phil, if I am proud, so are you, and it may be that the time will come, when you will be ashamed to remember that your wife was a mine girl. But enough. I shall wait until I am twenty-one before I am married; and I shall work at the mine, as I see no other way of supporting myself, and staying with Flipsy. If at the end of that time you still wish to marry me, I will keep my promise."

"Still wish to marry you! Just as if I had not loved you all my life. Norah, what has come over you?"

Norah did not answer his question, but instead, said quietly, though there was an eager look on



her face: "Phil, if at any time you should think you had made a mistake in asking me to marry you, only tell me, and I will give you back your troth."

"I believe you will, when I do," answered Phil, with a light laugh; "just as if that were possible, after all the trouble I have had to win you."

Norah's eyes dropped, but no look of pleasure came into her face at her lover's disclaimer.

"Is it possible that she would be glad if I proved false to her?" thought Phil, as he walked homeward that night. But before he saw her again, the idea had been completely driven out of his head.

Captain Phil had not been to see Norah for a week. She had been surprised not to see him at church on the Sunday, but did not trouble about it, but when evening after evening passed by, and still no Phil put in an appearance, a strange feeling came over her. Still she was not alarmed, for she knew that he was not ill, for her father had spoken about his being underground with the men.

The following Saturday was "pay-day," and Norah came home early. She was alone in the house, for William had taken Flipsy out for an "airing" as he termed it, and George had gone with them. Mrs. Lang had betaken herself into a neighbour's house "just for a few minutes," to talk over matters, and to plan how people ought to manage their business if "they acted as they ought to."

After Norah had put the kitchen straight, and

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dusted the furniture in the parlour, and gathered fresh flowers, she tidied herself, and taking her sewing and a chair she sat in the doorway, where she could smell the flowers, and look at them occasionally.

She was enjoying the dreamy quiet of the summer's afternoon, where the only sounds were the singing of the birds, and the low humming of the bees as they flew from flower to flower. It was a delightful change from the noisy stamps and the clashing of machinery at the mine. And apart from that, Norah always felt better satisfied with herself and surroundings, when she had put off her coarse mine dress and long bibbed apron, and the huge sunbonnet which hid all her rippling dark hair, but which effectually protected her face from the burning rays of the sun.

It was with a feeling of great content, that she sang softly to herself the "Gardener's Song," as she bent over her sewing. She had quite forgotten Captain Phil, and knew not that he was outside leaning on the garden wall, watching her.

At any other time Phil would have felt proud at the thought of being the owner of such a handsome girl; for Norah looked undeniably handsome that afternoon. The clean print dress which she had put on fitted her fine form to perfection, while the white lace at neck and sleeves gave it a dainty look. Where the lace met at the throat, she had fastened a bunch of scarlet geraniums, which matched well her clear dark skin: and as Phil gazed at her, and thought of the news he had

to tell, he groaned aloud. Hearing the groan, Norah looked up, and seeing the look of pain on Phil's face, she exclaimed :

"Why, Phil ! what is the matter ? "

For answer Phil opened the gate, and walking up to her, took her hand, and said, " Let us go indoors, Norah, and then I will tell you."

Wonderingly, Norah followed him into the little parlour, and sitting down on a chair opposite him, she waited for him to speak.

Whatever it was Phil had to tell, he seemed in no hurry to tell it. First he took a roll of music from his pocket and laid it on the table, then a small parcel, and then seeing that Norah was looking at him in surprise, he burst out with, "Oh, Norah ! Norah ! I have come to say good-bye."

"What !" said Norah, starting up and all the colour slowly leaving her cheeks. But Phil only groaned, and sitting down again, Norah sat for awhile in silence, and then she said in a perfectly steady voice : " I suppose you have found out that you are too proud to marry a mine girl, and have come for your liberty. Well, I give it you, and if you will wait a few minutes, I will return the books and music which you have given me."

"No, no, Norah. You have mistaken my meaning altogether," groaned Phil. " I expect it will be the other way about when I have told you all. You will be asking me to set *you* free. But, Norah, my darling, do not turn against me, for I love you so much," and Phil laid his head with a

despairing gesture on the table, while a hoarse sob shook his frame.

A strange feeling crept over Norah, but whether it was hope for herself, or pity for Captain Phil, she hardly knew. She tried to believe that it was the latter, and standing by his side she quietly stroked the blonde curls that clustered so thickly around his well-shaped head. Lifting his face from his hands, Phil looked up and said eagerly :

"You do like me a little, don't you, Norah?"

"I like you very much, Phil, and I want to know what it is that is troubling you?" answered Norah in kind, smooth tones, and still stroking his hair with her hand.

This gave Phil courage to tell his tale, although he kept his face hidden from her view. It was a tale that brought tears of remorse into Norah's eyes, and to ease her conscience, which accused her of neglecting her duty, she inwardly vowed that she would cling closer than ever to the man who had risked his life at her bidding.

Holding one of Norah's hands, and pressing it against one side of his face, Phil told her how he had gone a-hunting the Saturday before. How, after an exciting chase, and being both hungry and thirsty, he and two of the shareholders of the St George Mine, had gone into a hotel and ordered refreshments; and that he had forgotten himself, and took a great deal more wine than was good for him.

"Somehow, I don't know how it is," said Captain Phil, with a puzzled look, "but if ever I get

any drink in my head, I get quarrelsome. I am not so at any other time. I was not drunk, mind you, but I was boastful, and used insulting language to those two gentlemen. I contradicted them in everything. They tried to quiet me, but that only made me worse, and in my fury at being treated like a child, I hurled my glass with its contents in Mr. Allchurch's face. I called on him on the Monday, and apologised; but he is a proud man, Norah. He would not forgive me. 'Had you been drunk, I would have overlooked it,' he said. 'But you were not, you knew very well what you were saying and doing. I never allow my subordinates to insult me, Captain Trevathen.' And with a polite bow he showed me to the door.

"I have felt so miserable this week, that I have not been able to come to see you, for I knew then, as well as I do now, that I should be dismissed from the mine. I do not find fault with Mr. Allchurch, he has behaved honourably with me. This morning, before Captain Williams and the manager, he said that owing to the depression in trade, and the low price of tin, he and the other shareholders had agreed to cut down the expenses. Some of the men were to be dismissed, and one of the captains. As Captain Williams was a married man with a large family, and I was young and single, they thought it would be only right that they should keep Captain Williams."

"Was that true about the depression in trade, or only an excuse to be rid of you, Phil?" asked Norah, anxiously.

"It is quite true," answered Phil, gravely. "Trade is dull all over the country. And as for the St. George Mine, I should not be surprised to hear that it was stopped any day, for the adventurers are losing money all the time. Still, I do not think *that* was the real reason for my being dismissed. It was that unfortunate affair at the hotel."

"I wish you were a Christian, Phil," said Norah, softly.

"Why do you wish that?" asked Phil, soberly.

"I think then that you would be a teetotaler. And surely, Phil, you must know that a thing cannot be good, which makes a man forget himself, so that he doesn't care what he says or does."

Captain Phil stirred uneasily in his chair, and then said: "I have made up my mind never to drink so much again. But, Norah, you have not asked me what I am going to do."

"Well, what are you? And why did you say just now that you had come to say good-bye?"

"Because I am going to leave England. Yes, Norah, I have made up my mind to accept my uncle's oft-repeated invitation to go out to California. He will get me a situation, and that is more than I can do here."

"Have you tried, Phil? Don't you think you could get into some other mine? You are so clever at mining. I think you might."

Phil smiled, well pleased at Norah's praise; but he shook his head as he answered: "There is

no chance at all, Norah. I doubt if I should be able to get work as a miner. And times will very likely grow worse. As I cannot afford to live without working, there is nothing for me to do but accept my uncle's offer. I should not think of getting married on a working man's wages, and I am ashamed to tell it, but I have saved but a very little out of my salary. Oh, dear! what a fool I have been. But I will begin afresh; and in a few years time, I will make you a home fit for a queen."

"And by that time, you will have seen some one who will grace your palace better than I could. Norah Lang, the mine girl, will be too low for you then."

"And suppose that should come to pass, what would you do then, Norah?" asked Phil, with an amused look on his face.

"Bring you up for breach of promise, and claim a thousand pounds for my damaged affections," said Norah, with a merry twinkle in her dark eyes.

"You would get it, Norah, if you went in court with that look on your handsome face," said Phil. And then he added with a sigh: "Oh, dear! I little thought a month ago that I should be obliged to part from what I love best in the world. It nearly breaks my heart when I remember that it is my own folly that has brought it about. I wish I needn't go, Norah."

"Poor Phil, I am so sorry," said Norah, the hot tears springing to her eyes, and one of them

splashing down on Phil's face. For now that he was leaving her, Norah remembered only the kindness of the lover who had granted her every wish.

"Why, Norah! do you love me so well as to cry over me?" asked Phil, a look of joy lighting up his face. "And I have been afraid that you would ask me to give you up. But you won't, will you?"

"Suppose I did, what would you say?" asked Norah, with a keen look at Phil.

"I should say that Julia was right when she told me that as plain Phil Trevathen I should have no chance with you, and that it was only because I was captain at the St. George Mine, and the owner of a little money, that you favoured my suit. But what nonsense I am talking, Norah," said Phil, as he saw the dark look on Norah's face. "I know that you were only joking. You will not forsake me, dear, because I am comparatively a poor man?"

"I had no thought of money when I promised to be your wife," answered Norah, gravely. "And now that you tell me you are poor, I shall not break my promise."

"And you will wait five years for me, Norah? I shall be a rich man by that time if I live. And, Norah,"—and Phil spoke hesitatingly—"you will not marry any one till the five years are up, even if you shouldn't hear from me, will you? Letters get lost sometimes, or I might be ill and not able to write."

"I promise to wait five years for you, Phil," answered Norah, with white lips.

"And if then you should neither hear from or

see me, you are free, I give you your liberty," said Phil, trying to speak cheerfully. And then getting up and untying the parcel, he took out a beautiful gold locket, with his picture on one side and a curl of hair on the other. As he fastened the chain around Norah's neck he said beseechingly :

"You will look at it sometimes, won't you, dear? And remember that I love you better than anyone else in the world. And here is a book for Flipsy."

This thoughtful remembrance of her invalid sister in the midst of all his own troubles touched Norah's heart more than anything that had gone before ; and as Phil knelt by her side with the open book in his hands, she voluntarily threw her arms around his neck, and pressed her lips to his.

The thought of that caress gave Phil more satisfaction than anything that Norah had ever done or said. And two nights later, as he stood on the deck of the outward bound vessel, and looked up at the twinkling stars, he murmured exultingly :

"She loves me, for it is the first time she ever kissed me willingly, my proud queen." And then as he looked over the vessel's side and gazed down at the shining water he hastily brushed a tear from his eye as he thought :

"It will be five years before I shall see her again. Who knows what may happen in that time? But there is one thing I am sure of, Norah will be true to me, for she has promised, and she is truth itself. If any one is false, it will be me. That's one comfort."

And with his spirits considerably lightened at the thought of Norah's utter trustworthiness, Captain Phil was soon pacing up and down the deck, trying his "sea legs," and singing softly to himself as he walked.



CHAPTER V.

Two Years Later.



WE have been here a month now. How do you like the people and the neighbourhood?"

"I like this place very much, with its rugged hills and sunny valleys; but would like to know the

people better before I passed an opinion on them."

The speakers were the Rev. Felix Patterson, and his daughter, Miss Lillie Patterson. The former was the vicar of the parish, a tall stout man, with flaxen hair, and a clean shaven face. "A very worthy man," his parishioners had decided, and were disposed to be very friendly with the 'new parson.'

His predecessor had not been a favourite with the people, being reserved and austere ; and when he died there was not much grief felt for him. But Mr. Patterson was a man of a different stamp, being broad and liberal in his views, kind and charitable in his actions ; and the chatty, genial parson was soon quite a favourite with the people. They soon found that he could relish a joke as well as any of them, and anything specially laughable was generally told to the " parson."

Miss Lillie Patterson, at the time we write, was seventeen years of age. She was scarcely up to the medium height, with a slim graceful figure, but spite of her smallness she looked almost queenly : and the people from the first had named her " Our Cornish Queen."

Nothing had ever seemed lovelier to them than Lillie Patterson, as she sat in the parsonage pew the first Sabbath morning. She was dressed in a dark purple velvet dress, which just matched her eyes. Her clear cut, oval face was almost as white as the lilies that she wore at her throat. Under the purple velvet hat, with the soft white plume, rippled masses of golden curls, which reached almost to her waist. Everything about her was purple and white, and it was this fondness for the royal colour perhaps which gave her her name.

Mr. Patterson was a widower. He had a son who was older than Lillie, but he was away from home.

The father and daughter were seated at breakfast when the question, with which our chapter

commences, was asked. And as Mr. Patterson passed his cup he said with a quiet smile :

"I think you will find the people very much like the neighbourhood, Lillie. Some of them are like their own hills, hard to be got at, but worth the trouble, while others are easy of access, pleasant and agreeable at times, like the valleys when the sun is shining."

"I am glad that there are some easy to be got at, for I want them to give me some money," answered Lillie with a little rippling laugh that was pleasant to hear.

Mr. Patterson lifted his eyebrows, and with a comical look at his daughter said :

"My dear Lillie, don't you know you can have anything of these Cornish people except money?"

"I have heard so, and a lot of other things which may not be true. Anyway, I mean to try," said Lillie with a resolute look on her fair face.

"What do you want the money for?" asked Mr. Patterson, curiously.

"For a new organ. That wheezy old box of whistles, that goes by that name now, will give me the horrors soon. I really don't think I can endure it many more Sundays."

"But if you could get a new one you have no one who can play it: for poor old Morish's playing is as bad as the organ."

"I know it. But that can be remedied, for I will pay an organist myself, if it can be done no other way."

Mr. Patterson laughed and said: "I see you

are in earnest. But one thing more. Where is your choir coming from?"

"Oh, that is easy enough. I know several now that with a little training will make beautiful singers. Have you ever noticed that tall, handsome, dark-eyed girl who sits just down from your pulpit? She always has with her a little pale-faced girl, who seems to be a cripple."

"Yes, they are called Lang. I have seen their father, who seems an intelligent man, and better educated than most of the working men around here; and I have called at their cottage. I have never met the elder sister, but I have talked with the little one, and am greatly interested in her. You must call some day. But what were you going to say about Norah Lang?"

"Norah, is she called? It suits well that tall queenly girl. But I was going to say that I have heard her singing in church, and she has a clear rich voice, which will be a great help in our choir. For I mean to *have* a choir, and I shall ask Norah Lang."

"That's right, my dear, I wish you success," said Mr. Patterson, heartily.

"But you mustn't wish only, you must help, papa. Talk to some of those rugged men and get them to help us."

"I will try, but I think you will get on the best with them, little Lillie."

This proved to be the truth, for in less than twelve months there was a splendid new organ in the St. Orme church, and a very efficient choir;

and all owned that the praise was mostly due to Miss Lillie.

One old farmer laughingly remarked that "Their queen had only to command, and her subjects would obey."

An organist had turned up in the shape of a new schoolmaster who gave his services. Norah had been in the choir for some time, before she made his acquaintance ; but one evening when she came to practice, she found that she was early, and that the organist, a boy, and herself, were the only ones in the church. With a quiet "good evening, Mr. Newton," she was passing on to her seat, when he rose and holding out his hand said pleasantly :

"I am glad that you are an exception to the rule of ladies, Miss Lang."

"What is the rule ?" asked Norah, withdrawing her hand, and turning her eyes from the grey inquisitive ones, fixed so steadfastly on her.

"Don't take shelter behind ignorance, Miss Lang. You know the rule is, that ladies are always late. You are the fortunate exception," said Mr. Newton, politely ; but Norah could detect the sarcasm lurking in his voice.

"That is a very doubtful compliment, Mr. Newton, and I have no love for compliments that are paid at the expense of my sisters." And though there was a smile on Norah's face, her eyes met his with a defiant flash.

"You still prove that you are an exception ; for most of the ladies I have met will swallow compliments, no matter at whose expense they are

paid. But perhaps the Cornish *ladies* are different to our London girls," said Mr. Newton, with a mischievously wicked light in his eyes.

"I think if you stay here long enough you are likely to find out," answered Norah quietly. And then she walked to her seat and unrolled some music which she carried in her hand.

Some others came in then, and as Mr. Newton sat down to the organ he asked himself:

"Whatever does she mean? She can never have heard. No, I am certain they know nothing of it down here."

And then letting his fingers drop on the keys he began to bring out such rich, beautiful music, as Norah had never heard before. She forgot her dislike of the proud, cynical stranger, as she listened to the music; forgot also when it was her turn to sing. Miss Patterson, who was leader of the choir, was not there that evening, and Norah was quite taken aback when Mr. Newton, without looking at her, said curtly:

"Will you kindly oblige me by singing, Miss Lang?"

The hot blood rushed in a torrent to her cheeks, and her voice was quite choked as she tried to sing; but when he turned toward her, and Norah caught the tantalising look of his eyes, she forced down the rising emotion, and said, in a voice as cold as his own:

"If you will play it again, Mr. Newton, I will try to remember."

Without a word he turned to his music, and

without a tremble, Norah sang her solo. The others cheered her, saying it was better than she had ever sung it before: but Mr. Newton vouchsafed no word of praise.

This piqued Norah, but she found as the weeks passed by, that Mr. Newton, though finding fault with her at every mistake, never praised her, no matter how well she might do. Had she cared for his opinion, this might have grieved her, but from the first she had taken a dislike to their undoubtedly clever organist. The more she saw of him, and through the winter it was pretty often, the more she disliked him. He was, however, a clever music-teacher, and Norah, who had joined his class, was rapidly becoming a good musician.

Miss Patterson, finding that there were some really good voices in the choir, had decided, after much consultation with Mr. Newton, to get up some concerts through the winter. The money realised to be used to help to defray the debt on the organ.

At the first concert the choir were to sing three choruses, all the rest, with the exception of one piece, were to be sung by strangers. This piece was to be sung by Norah Lang and the first bass-singer, but on the evening of the concert, this man had sent word that his wife was ill, and he should not be there. All the singers were gathered in the class-room when the news came. Consternation sat on many faces, and most of the choir feared that their pieces would be a failure.

Mr. Newton, however, who never seemed to be moved at anything, said quietly :

"There is no need to worry, there are three or four bass singers here, and they know the pieces perfectly."

"Yes, they may do them all right, but what about the duet? None of the others have ever tried to sing it with Norah," said Miss Lillie, with a look of perplexity on her fair face.

"There will be quite enough without that, Miss Lillie, so we will let it go," said Norah, softly.

"That would be such a pity. You sing it so beautifully, too. I shall be awfully disappointed if we can't have it. And yet I would not like to have it spoiled."

"It would be a pity for you to be disappointed to-night, after working so hard, Miss Patterson, and if you will play, I will do my best to supply the deficiency. That is, if Miss Norah is agreeable." And Mr. Newton drew himself up proudly, and waited for Norah's answer.

Poor Norah was in a quandary. It would seem rude of her to refuse, and yet she thought she must. Had it not been that Tom Wallace, the bass-singer, was middle-aged and married, she would never have consented to sing the piece; for she knew that if Phil should ever hear of it, he would be madly jealous. But the reason that weighed most heavily with Norah was, that she thoroughly disliked Mr. Newton, and dreaded the thought of singing a piece with him, that was steeped in love. Raising her head to refuse, Norah caught Mr. Newton's grey eyes fixed on her, and as she saw the smile on his face, the thought darted through her brain like

lightning : " He thinks I am afraid to sing that piece with him, but he shall find himself mistaken." And turning to Miss Lillie, who was looking anxiously at her, she said quietly :

" I am sorry that Tom is not here ; but if Mr. Newton cares to take his place, I am willing to sing my part."

" Oh ! I am so glad. You have lifted a weight from my mind," said Miss Lillie, gratefully.

It was the first time that Norah had ever sung at a concert, and her heart beat a good deal louder than was pleasant ; but her clear voice was none the less sweet that it trembled a little in the opening piece : while the duet she sang with Mr. Newton was a perfect success, and called forth a storm of applause. Norah was very glad when it was all over, and pushing her way through the crowd, who were loitering around the door, passing their several opinions on the singing, Norah hurried out into the darkness.

The schoolroom was half a mile from the village, but Norah was used to travelling the dark lane alone, and so did not stop for Mrs. Lang and George, who were among the crowd at the door. She had not walked many yards when she heard swift footsteps behind ; and not knowing who it might be, and having no wish for company, she walked faster. But the steps were gaining on her, and she was startled a minute after by hearing Mr. Newton's voice say :

" What a swift walker you are, Miss Norah. Are you afraid that you walk so fast ? "

“Not much, though I can’t say I like being out alone when it is dark.”

“I should think not. Are there any ghosts seen here now, Miss Norah?” asked Mr. Newton, with a laugh.

“I haven’t heard of any lately. I think we are growing out of our superstitions here in Cornwall, Mr. Newton. And as education advances those fancies will all die away.”

“You are right, Miss Norah. But what abominable roads these are. Will you excuse me if I take your arm? I have always been accustomed to well-lighted streets, and can’t see an inch ahead of me in this pitchy darkness.”

And without waiting for permission, Mr. Newton linked his arm in Norah’s, who was speechless, not knowing what to say. Mr. Newton, on the contrary, was chatting away as freely as if it was the most natural thing in the world for him to walk home with Norah, with his arm in hers.

Poor Norah passed from one state of wonderment to another, for never had anyone talked to her, as her companion was talking to her that night. He asked her about the books she had read, and pointed out beauties in them, that she had only vaguely seen. He described to her some of the sights of London, and was in the middle of a most entertaining description of a grand picture, when Norah stopped at their gate.

“May I go in?” he asked, frankly. “I know scarcely anyone well enough to call on yet; but I have seen your father once, and should like to make his acquaintance.”

"Do you know that my father is a miner, and that I am a mine girl, Mr. Newton?" asked Norah, abruptly.

"Yes, I know. But what difference can that make?" asked Mr. Newton, softly.

"A great deal of difference in most people's eyes," answered Norah, shortly. And then, fearing that she had been rude, she added, courteously: "Come in, Mr. Newton, father will be very pleased to see you."

And opening the door she introduced him to her father and Flipsy, hoping fervently that he would leave before Mrs. Lang came, for Norah feared her stepmother's tongue.

Mr. Newton and Mr. Lang were soon engaged in a very animated conversation, and when the former rose to leave, Mr. Lang cordially invited him to call again. They were mutually pleased with each other, Mr. Lang telling Norah that he hardly knew the time when he had met with such an intelligent gentleman. While Mr. Newton was surprised to find in the Cornish miner a man of such keen intellect. That was the beginning of a pleasant friendship between the two.

For several weeks after the concert, Mr. Newton was kind and friendly with Norah, and was so patient with her over her music lessons, that she wondered how she could ever have disliked him. She forgot her fear of him, and when he seemed sad or silent, she pitied him, for Norah had learnt that he had suffered some great sorrow. What it was she knew not, but she saw that the sorrow,

whatever it might have been, had soured a disposition that was originally good.

Calling early one evening, he seemed to be in a silent mood, and being asked for some music, he sat down to the harmonium, and began playing something sad and dreamy. He had a strange power of making the instrument answer to his moods, and that evening, when he had finished, there were tears in Norah's eyes.

"You are easily moved, Miss Norah," said Mr. Newton, slowly. "It was only a day or two ago, when your father was telling me of a man who was cruel to his wife, I saw your eyes flash, and the colour rise in your cheeks, and you looked as if you would like to have the ordering of that man's punishment. But when it came to the point, I expect you would forgive him. That is how women make their greatest mistakes. They are guided by their hearts instead of their judgment," and then he added, grimly, "I think sometimes that women haven't any judgment."

"I don't think you have any right to say that, any more than I have to say that all men are rogues," said Norah, quietly. "Some men are rogues, but not all; and some women are fools, but not all."

"Oh no, I didn't say that they were fools, but that they lacked discrimination," said Mr. Newton, lightly.

Norah was silent, and he continued:

"They are easily turned from their purpose too, provided the flattery used is delicately laid on.

Flattery is generally a sure passport to a woman's heart, and it has been successfully used by most of Adam's sons, Miss Norah." There was a laughing light in Mr. Newton's eyes, as he saw the rising colour in Norah's cheeks.

"Very likely you are right, Mr. Newton, for a great number of Adam's sons have been, and *are*, deceivers," said Norah, dryly. "Flattery is lies, for if it was truth, it would cease to be flattery and become praise. So to say that men are successful flatterers, is to say that they are successful liars, and if you think that is anything to boast of, I don't."

"Very good, Miss Norah, but that also proves my theory that women lack discrimination, otherwise they would be able to judge between lies (as you very pointedly put it) and praise; and so be a match for deceiving men."

Blushing deeper, and laughing slightly, Norah answered: "You must give us fair play, Mr. Newton. You know it is said that Satan is the father of lies, so we may be sure that he will help those who use his children. Now, then, how can you expect us to be a match for men who are not only nearly perfect in the art themselves, but have Satan as a backer?"

"Oh, we can't ever expect it, Miss Norah, we *don't*," said Mr. Newton, looking very much amused. "The great wonder is how they ever put up with lying, deceitful men. How is it that they not only tolerate them, but seek and enjoy their society?"

"Because what they lack in judgment they

make up in pity, Mr. Newton. They know that man, left to himself, would be a sorry object."

The look on Mr. Newton's face changed, an angry light beamed from his eyes, and in a bitter, mocking tone he answered :

"I agree with you there. After she has made herself necessary to a man and then leaves him, he is a sorry object. And yet they do it, those *tender, pitiful* women. Deliver me from their tender mercies." And turning to the harmonium again, Mr. Newton struck the keys almost savagely, and five minutes later he rose, and bowing politely to Norah without offering to shake hands, he left the house.

Norah looked after him anxiously, as he strode down the road, and wondered within herself what she had done to vex him. She saw him again the next evening, at their second concert, and noticed with a feeling of gladness, that the cloud had passed from his face, and he was genial and kind again.

But after that evening he seemed to shun Norah ; he never looked at or spoke to her, unless he was obliged to. He became again the cold, cynical man, whom she had learned to fear, and almost hate. It was as if he had lifted a mask for the last few weeks, and then had dropped it again. Norah never said anything about it to anyone, but she missed his kind smile and pleasant banter, more than she ever cared to own. Sometimes she wondered if she were dreaming. Surely this could not be the Mr. Newton with whom she had had

such pleasant conversations. And then, as she puzzled her head to account for the change in his manner, she came to the conclusion "that something had turned up in connection with the old sorrow." And willing to think the best of him, Norah thought, pityingly :

"He feels savage with everyone, I expect, and not with me alone. Perhaps he will be his true self again in a few days. I hope so, anyway. I wonder what that sorrow can be?"

Yes, what was it?





CHAPTER VI.

The Reason Why.

WHEN Mr. Newton was twenty, he had fallen in love with a most beautiful girl, and married her. He believed her to be all that was good and pure, and worshipped her with all the strength of his warm, boyish heart. For two years he hugged the delusion of her goodness to his soul, and it was only when his wife herself pulled the veil aside, that he saw how he had been deceived.

It was a cruel awakening for him, for though it was only too probable that, sooner or later, he would have learnt for himself what a false, selfish heart that fair exterior covered, the shock was all the harder to bear, because it had come so suddenly. The knowledge that his wife had left him, was easier to bear than the sentence in that cruel note she had left, in which she told him that she had never loved him.

With his love thrown back at him, his faith shattered, his home empty, and his name disgraced, Frank Newton asked himself in despair what he had left to live for?

He felt the utmost contempt for himself, for being so deceived, and he hated his wife with the most bitter hatred for her treachery. Brooding over his sorrow, he became from a happy, warm-hearted, boyish young fellow, the sad, cynical man that we now know.

He saw other men with loving wives and happy homes, and the knowledge that there could be neither home nor wife for him, only made him more morose and unhappy. Then there was always the haunting fear that his secret would come to light, and he be pointed at as a deserted husband.

He left his home in Devonshire, and made a home for himself in London, shunning all his old acquaintances, and trying in every way to bury the secret, that had destroyed his happiness. Getting tired of London, he had come to Cornwall.

He had persuaded himself by this time, that all girls were hollow and heartless, and when he began to feel interested in *Norah Lang*, he tried to crush the feeling with the harsh thought, "She is like all the others, well enough to look at, but false at heart."

But try hard as he might, he could not help thinking of her. He noticed that she talked much more correctly than the other girls in the choir, and though not at all shy, she never thrust herself into sight. He heard with surprise that she was a mine girl, but he saw that far from letting her work drag her down, she had ennobled it. He watched her narrowly, and began to think altogether too much about her for his peace of mind. Then

he tried by being more cold and distant towards her, to cover up the interest he felt in her. But when he found her suffering from a headache that night of the concert, and saw the tears gather in her eyes when he spoke kindly to her, he forgot everything but Norah, and was his own true self again. He told himself that for one night he would be free and happy. He went home with Norah as we have seen, calling often at their house in the weeks that followed.

Sometimes doubts would obtrude themselves as to the wisdom of his actions, but he lulled them to sleep again by saying, "That his heart was dead. He had been deceived once, and should never love again." But when some one told him laughingly, on the evening of the second concert, that it would not do for Captain Phil Trevathen to hear him singing with his lady love, his eyes were opened as to his own state of feelings.

It was the first hint that he had heard of Norah's engagement, and on asking another, and hearing the story confirmed, he could not doubt its truth. It was then he learned that he loved Norah. Hitherto he had kept free of entanglements, and, up to the age of eight-and-twenty, he had never felt love for any woman, but the ill-starred love he had felt for his wife.

Love comes as a blessing to some men, but to Frank Newton it came like a curse. He knew that had Norah been free as the air, he had no right to ask her to be his wife. He was bound by the law to another. But worse than that, was the thought

that his love was again wasted ; for did not Norah love Phil Trevathen ?

Poor Frank ! It seemed as though a Divinity rough-hewed his life, without any help on his part. But the crooked places will be made straight, if we will only wait the Lord's time. But that was just what Frank Newton would not do. He wanted to make the crooked places straight himself, and finding that he could not do it, he chafed at his lot, and thought that God was dealing hardly with him. He had long since ceased to pray, for he had come to the conclusion that God neither heard nor answered his prayers.

It is well for us that God knows better what we want than we know ourselves. Have we not often, in looking back at some period in our lives, thanked God that the petitions we so fervently sent up were not answered ?

"He guides our steps through all the tangled maze,
In paths of peace and wisdom's pleasant ways."

We are puzzled sometimes to know why the gift which once we so much coveted was withheld then, and given to us when we had ceased to care for it ! Some such thoughts as these passed through Mr. Newton's mind, when the news came that he was free. His wife was dead. The news which two years before would have filled him with joy, now only caused him a quiet satisfaction. He knew that he was free now to love or marry, but the one he loved cared nothing for him, and was

engaged to another. With love's unreasonableness, Mr. Newton thought that Norah had wronged him, and he tried hard to kill the love which he felt for her, but he could not succeed.

At first he shunned her, but fearing that would be noticed, he tried by his cold careless manner to make her believe that he cared nothing for her. In this he succeeded only too well ; for poor Norah, knowing nothing of his story, thought that there must be something wrong about her, that he disliked her so much, and was much grieved over it.

He came often to their house, and with Mr. Lang and Flipsy he was the courteous, affable gentleman always. Once or twice Norah, happening to look up suddenly, caught his gaze fixed on her, and something in the look of those grey eyes set her heart beating, and made her eyelids droop ; but if he spoke to her, it was in the most indifferent manner.

To Flipsy he had taken a great liking, talking often to her in the kind tones he always used when speaking to her, and helping her in her studies whenever he called. Norah would watch him as he sat by the fireside talking to her father or Flipsy, and as she listened to him, she wished that he would be friendly with her again, so that she might question him about some of the things of which he was talking.

Norah had not the courage to break through the air of icy reserve that he maintained toward her ; and, after awhile, she made a point of shunning him as much as possible.

The heart that had slept so long was now awake, and Norah found that far from loving Phil, her affianced husband, her heart had stolen from her, and all its wealth was lavished on this cold stranger. During one of those evenings when she had sat there, listening to his brilliant talk, admiring his gentlemanly, polished manner, and wishing that Phil was more like him, she suddenly woke up to the fact, that here was the ideal of her dreams. Her king had come, but the knowledge gave her no satisfaction, nay, it increased her misery. For was she not bound in honour to another? And besides that, the king took no notice of her. She was not the beggar maid who should charm him. And that which had grieved her so those long winter evenings, was now a comfort to her, for it helped her to carry her burden of pain with more ease.

Had Mr. Newton taken any notice of her, Norah might have hoped that all would turn out well ; for Phil had not written for several months, and the letters she had sent to him had been returned ; but as it was, she had no foundation for hope.

Thus the winter slipped by, and summer came around once more. Three things happened that summer which we must speak of. The first and most important was, that Flipsy's health had improved so much that she was able to walk alone. Her back was still crooked, but it no longer pained her as formerly, and as she took daily walks in the open air, her strength gradually improved, and a tinge of health appeared on her pale cheeks.

Sometimes, as she looked at herself in the mirror, she would think : " I am not so very ugly after all. If my eyes had not been so small, and my mouth so large, I believe I should be rather pretty. My hair is certainly beautiful, and what is more, it is so thick and long that it quite covers up my crooked back. Oh ! if I could only succeed in *that* I should be content."

The second thing was that Flipsy had a secret which she kept from everyone but Miss Lillie, with whom she had become a great friend. Indeed, the " Cornish Queen " had established a friendship with nearly every one for a dozen miles around. Every day, when it was fine, she would be seen in her little pony phaeton, generally with a huge basket at her feet, driving through the lanes or stopping at the little hamlets that dotted the country so thickly around St. Orme. It was no wonder that the people loved her, always kind and sympathetic, and ever ready to help the poor, going into houses so poor and dirty that none but a doctor would enter ; she had won the respect and love of all. But to return to Flipsy's secret. Norah was very much puzzled about it, and not a little hurt, for it was the first secret Flipsy had ever kept from her. (Alas ! it was not to be the last.) Once she had heard Miss Lillie say :

" You must not be discouraged at a few failures, Flipsy. They will only strengthen you, and help you to do better."

And then, seeing her, they had dropped the conversation. Norah was too proud to ask, but it

hurt her more than she ever cared to own, that a stranger should be trusted before her.

We do not uphold Flipsy in this, for who can sympathise with us so truly as those who have loved us all our lives? But Flipsy had done it that she might surprise Norah. She wanted to be able to show her work to Norah, and say, "Read this, it is mine."

Yes, Flipsy had found her calling. Coming across her diary one day, and wondering what she should fill it with, she had decided to do as Captain Phil had said, "Write a story." It should be a story for children she had decided. Something that would be welcomed, perhaps, by just such another little cripple as herself. But Flipsy was ignorant of all rules of composition, and so her story was written without regard to paragraph or punctuation.

When Miss Lillie had called to see her two or three times, and was so sweet and pleasant, Flipsy was emboldened, with many blushes, and much stammering, to tell her what she had done: and how she hoped that by her cleverness she might make people forget how ugly she was.

Miss Lillie read the story in a short time, so short a time that Flipsy was surprised that what had taken her so long to write could be read so quickly. As gently as possible Miss Lillie told her that her story would not do, and pointed out to her where she ought to have broken up her words into sentences, and told her how she must punctuate them.

Flipsy had hoped much from this story, and was

greatly discouraged ; and though she saw the wisdom of Miss Lillie's remarks, she thought she should give it up, spite of the encouragement that accompanied them. But the idea had taken too deep root to die altogether, and in a few weeks Flipsy tried again ; being careful to follow Miss Lillie's instructions.

At last, after being re-written three times, Miss Lillie thought it would do, and had told Flipsy she should try to get it printed.

This was the summer of which we have been writing, just four years after we left Phil Trevathen singing on boarding the *Peoria* : and Flipsy was hoping and praying that she might have an affirmative answer against her nineteenth birthday.

The third thing that happened that summer was that George, who had been apprenticed to a carpenter in the village, left home, having served his apprenticeship. A skilful hand was wanted to work on a new building at Plymouth, and George had been taken on at good wages, coming home only once a month.

They all missed him, for he was light-hearted, good-tempered, and merry. Mrs. Lang was proud of him, as well she might be, and was never tired of telling the neighbours how clever her boy was. Flipsy missed him very much, and turned all the more to Mr. Newton for help in her studies. He was very kind to her, and petted her as if she had been a child ; for being so small, she did not look more than fifteen.

Flipsy had her wish, for on the very day

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that she was nineteen, Miss Lillie brought a letter, which she had received from the editor of a child's magazine, saying that the story had been accepted, and would appear in due course.

Flipsy was almost wild with joy, and confidently expected that it would appear in the next month's magazine. But to her disappointment, month after month passed by, and still it did not come, and it was not until the January after that it appeared. Dozens of times that day Flipsy looked at her story, and wished that Norah was at home, and when at last Norah came, she could not find words to tell her about it, so opened the magazine, and laying it on Norah's lap, pointed with a trembling finger to the title, "*Jenny and Willie*, by Philippa Lang." Norah stared at it, and then read through the story, and putting aside her own pain at being kept out of the knowledge, until it was open to every one, she caught Flipsy in her arms, and said playfully :

"You sly little puss, to turn authoress, and never let me know anything about it."

"I wanted to surprise you, Norah, and I have," said Flipsy, with a joyous laugh. "Oh, Norah, I am so happy I hardly know what to do. I shall go on writing now, and by and by I shall write a long story, and then I shall get paid for it ; then you shall not go to mine any more."

"I shall not go to mine much longer I suppose," said Norah, in a dreary voice, and a look of pain in the bright dark eyes. "Phil promised to be home in five years, and the five years will be up in July."

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“And then you will be married I suppose?” said Flipsy, not noticing Norah’s dreary tones.

“I suppose so,” answered Norah, turning her face away.

“Oh, I am so glad,” answered Flipsy, clapping her hands. “I was never to a wedding in my life. I am glad I am better and able to go almost anywhere. It will be jolly, too, to see Captain Phil, for it was he who put the idea of writing into my head. I hope he will prove true, Norah, and come home loving you as much as when he left. Don’t you?”

Norah made no answer. She hardly knew if she cared whether Phil was true or false. Sometimes she thought she should be glad to marry him, and end the struggle. She was madly ashamed of herself for letting her heart stray after a stranger, who, with the exception of those few happy weeks, had always treated her with the utmost indifference. At other times she hoped that Phil would be false to her, for she shuddered at the idea of marrying one man, while her heart had been given to another.

Sometimes after she had been to practice, and saw how courteous and deferential Mr. Newton was with Miss Lillie, while he scarcely noticed her, she would be seized with a fit of mad jealousy, and for the time hated them both. After that had passed away, a feeling of apathetic indifference would creep over her, and then she cared not which way things might turn.

In this state of hopelessness Norah passed the time until Phil was expected to return. *But he came not.*

CHAPTER VII.

Troubled Times.



PHIL had told Norah that if she did not hear from or see him at the end of five years she would be free. The five years had passed, and she had heard nothing of him. She was there-

fore free. But no thought of freedom entered her head, for if Phil was living, she said, he would be true to her, and would come home and claim her some time.

Norah had other troubles to occupy her thoughts now; for rumours were rife that the St. George Mine was about to be stopped. The "lode" that

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was to have repaid the adventurers for their heavy outlay, had proved poor, and would not pay for working. This, along with the low price of tin, was very depressing. A meeting was called, and the shareholders agreed to suspend operations until spring, when it was to be hoped the price of tin would have risen. The engine was to be kept working, or the mine would be inundated. It was also agreed that the miners should be offered the chance of working on "tribute." That means, if they got no tin they would receive no wages.

This arrangement was carried into effect, and the men gladly accepted the offer, thinking that a small "pay-day" would be better than none. Besides that, there was the chance of cutting some rich lode or vein, and getting a "start."

There were also other reasons why they should accept the offer. Several mines were idle, scores of men were "out of employ," and winter was closing in on them.

In the beginning of November, Norah received her discharge, along with the other girls. Knowing what a bitter time she should have if she stopped at home, Norah went out sewing. But there were so many girls idle that there was not much work for her; and by the end of the month she could get no sewing to do. Then she tried to get work from the farmers; but there is little that a woman can do on a farm in the winter, and Norah received the same answer at the different farms she called at, "We have nothing that a woman can do."

She would gladly have gone into service at

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this time, but in the early part of the winter Flipsy had taken cold, and it had settled in her back, and she was again an invalid confined to the sofa. For her sake Norah resolved to do anything before she left her : and as the manager of the mine gave them to understand that it would be started again in the spring, Norah hoped that she should be able to manage until then. But when she could get nothing to do, and the little she had saved was exhausted, her lot was a miserable one.

Mr. Lang's wages had grown smaller each month, and when in January he brought home only one pound, Mrs. Lang was speechless with wrath.

"I cannot help it," said William, dejectedly, as he gave his wife his month's pay. "I have worked like a slave, but the tin is scanty, and the price they give us for it low. And then they deduct so much for costs, that there is scarcely any money left for the men."

"But what am I to do with this, and four of us to live on it?" demanded Mrs. Lang, spitefully. At the same time darting an angry look at Norah.

"You must manage somehow. We cannot always expect to have good pay-days. Besides, there are other men with larger families who have to manage on the same. We cannot count much more than three, for this little pale-face eats scarcely anything. I wish she would eat more," said William, caressing Flipsy's pale cheeks.

"Oh, no doubt; you are always thinking of her. But what about your other daughter, who


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has an appetite large enough for anyone? She is to be maintained as a lady, I suppose, on this magnificent income," said Mrs. Lang, whose temper by this time was at boiling pitch.

"While there is bread in the house Norah shall have her share." William spoke quietly, but there was an angry light in his eyes.

"All very fine," said Mrs. Lang, angrily. "I'd like to know where the bread is coming from? If I couldn't get more'n a pound a month, I wouldn't keep a lazy, skulking daughter with me. She should go into service, where she ought to 'ave been years ago."

"Jane! that speech was altogether unnecessary, and, what is more, it must not be repeated; you understand me?" said William, in a hoarse voice. He was struggling manfully to keep down his hot temper. His wife saw the rising storm, and cowering before the look on his face, she burst out weeping, and in the midst of her sobs said:

"I know it. You are—tired of me already. And I—have tried to be—such a good wife—and have loved you—u so." And then there was a perfect deluge of tears, in the midst of which William walked out of the house.

Finding her husband had left, Mrs. Lang wiped her eyes, and springing up she began abusing Norah, and accusing her of causing strife between husband and wife.

"Oh, mother, don't," said Flipsy, tearfully. "It is not Norah's fault."

"Take that, will you, and shut up?" and Mrs.

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Lang's hand was laid with no light touch across Flipsy's cheek.

It was the first time she had ever struck Flipsy, but now, carried away by passion, she had forgotten herself.

With a lightning spring Norah was on her feet, and with her hands clasped with a vice-like grip around Mrs. Lang's arms, she stood facing her. Like her father Norah was not easily roused, and Mrs. Lang had never known before what slumbered beneath Norah's quiet exterior. But now, as she looked at her, she trembled at the storm she had raised. Norah's eyes, always dark, now looked black as midnight, and strange lights burned in them. Her face was quite pale, with the exception of a fiery spot on each cheek. Her jaws were firmly locked, and her lips pressed tightly together. Without speaking she looked at Mrs. Lang, who trembled perceptibly, and said in whimpering tones:

"What are you going to do to me? Don't look like that, I haven't done nothing to you."

"To me, no!" broke in Norah, passionately. "You would not dare to touch *me*. But a little invalid, who is not able to resent it, you strike as if she were a dog; you big cowardly vixen." And Norah tightened her grip on her stepmother's arm.

"Let me go, Norah Lang, or I'll tell your father," said Mrs. Lang, in frightened tones.

"No you won't. You won't dare to. If he had seen you strike Flipsy he'd have thrown you out of the house. I've a great mind to do it myself."

"Oh, don't, Norah. I'll never touch her again

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if you'll let me go," said Mrs. Lang, in great terror.

"You'd better not ; for you're nothing in my hands, big as you are," said Norah, with a look of scorn at the big woman she held so easily. "And when I think of your striking Flipsy, a little thing who has suffered all her life, I can scarcely help punishing you as you deserve."

"Do let her go, Norah. I can't bear it," came from Flipsy in sobbing tones.

Norah's hands relaxed their grasp, and dropped nervelessly at her side ; and seizing the opportunity Mrs. Lang darted out of the room.

Turning towards the sofa, and seeing Flipsy crying as if her heart would break, Norah dropped down beside her, and buried her face in Flipsy's dress without speaking.

For some time the silence was broken only by Flipsy's sobs, and then seeing how still Norah was, she wiped away her tears, and said imploringly :

"Speak to me, Norah, do. Mother is gone now."

Norah shivered, and lifted a face from which all passion had fled. There was a dreary, hopeless look on it, and in low, dejected tones she said :

"Is she gone ? I am glad of that, for I do not want to see her again until I can control myself."

"Oh, Norah, you frightened me just now. I was afraid you would kill her, you looked so awful," said Flipsy, the scared look returning to her face. "I never saw you look like that before."

"No, it is years since I have ever been in such



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a passion. I thought I had conquered my hot temper, but I see now it was only sleeping. I have no faith left in myself." A minute later she asked wearily, "I did not hurt her, did I, Flipsy?"

"No, you only frightened her, and she deserved that. She had no business to say such horrid things to you."

"It was not that, although that was bad enough, and I have borne more insults from that woman than from anyone else in the world; but what maddened me was to see her strike you. I felt like throwing her out of the house. I am thankful something kept me from it; not but that she deserved it; but, Flipsy, I feel so mean and degraded. I have always thought it such a low thing to see women brawling. And I a Christian, too. Oh, dear!"

"Never mind, you did not harm her. Perhaps it will teach her a lesson," said Flipsy, a smile breaking over her face.

"Yes, I don't think she will dare to provoke me again in that manner," said Norah. And then sighing heavily she added, "I feel so miserable, Flipsy, that I hardly know what to do with myself."

"Poor Norah! I'm so sorry, but I can do nothing. I'm only in the way. I wonder why I was born?"

"I've wondered why I was born many a time; but I suppose we answer some kind of a purpose in the world, or else we should not be here. It takes all sorts of people to make a world, you know; so

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we must satisfy ourselves with the thought that we help to make the variety. It is only when things go wrong that we wonder why we are here ; at other times we think we are very important personages, and that the world could not get along without us."

Flipsy smiled. "I fancy the world would get along very comfortably without *us*, Norah. But we are in it, and must make the best of our lives. Grumbling will not help us, so let us look things straight in the face. What are you thinking to do next ?"

"I don't know what to do," said Norah, with a heavy sigh, as she rose from her recumbent position. "If I could get along until May, we should be all right, for the St. George Mine will start afresh then. But what to do in the meantime is what troubles me." And Norah pressed her hands to her head, and gazed out of the window.

"How is it that we are so poor, Norah ? Other people rear up larger families on the same wages as father gets. I know I have been expensive, but surely it has not taken all the money ?" said Flipsy anxiously.

"You are right, Flipsy ; and while mother lived she always put a little by every year, and I did the same while I was housekeeper. It is in the bank now, and unless we are in absolute want we shall not touch it. It has been saved for you ; for as you were an invalid, mother and father wanted to leave something for you in case anything happened to them."

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"Does mother—I mean George's mother—know anything about it?" asked Flipsy, opening her eyes wide.

"No, and you must never tell her. If she knew it there would be no rest until it was all spent. She spends every farthing father gets; there has never been anything saved by her. There shall be no excuse for her knowing anything about this if I can help it."

"But, Norah, if it goes on long like this, we shall be obliged to. I will not consent for you and father worrying yourselves to death, just because the money saved for me shall not be used. Besides, I may be able to get money for myself, and may never need it," said Flipsy, a look of hope lighting up her face.

"It is always the wisest plan to be on the safe side, dear. If anything were to happen to father and me, you would be alone in the world. Then what could you do, dear, an invalid? Don't cry, Flipsy, I will work my fingers to the bone before the little fund we have saved for you shall be touched."

There was silence between them for a few minutes, and then Norah, who was looking absently out of the window, exclaimed, as a cart filled with turnips passed along the road, "I have it! I wonder I did not think of it before. It is the time for taking up turnips; I can get employed at that I know, for women work cheaper than men, and do quite as much work as men do."

"But, Norah, that is such mean, dirty work, I don't like you to do it," said Flipsy wistfully.

“It can’t be helped ; I cannot afford to be particular. Don’t make it any harder for me, Flipsy.”

“What would Captain Phil say if he knew it, I wonder?” Norah was silent, and Flipsy continued : “I wish you’d let me write to him, Norah, and tell him ; for if he is living I am sure he would not let you do such work. May I, Norah?”

“Never!” said Norah proudly. “If he is living he has forgotten me, and if he is dead he cannot help me. Don’t trouble about it, Flipsy. I have nothing to be proud of now. Once I should have been too proud to do such work, but it does not matter now. No one cares what I do, and as long as it is honest what does it matter? I have nothing to look forward to ; all I care about is to get money enough to live through the winter.”

The weary, hopeless tones in which Norah spoke wrung Flipsy’s heart, and brought the tears to her eyes, but before she could speak, Norah said:

“Father is coming, and as you will not be alone, I think I will put on my ulster, and go over to Prospect Farm and ask the Squire for work. It isn’t late, I can be back again before dark,” and a few minutes later Norah was ascending Prospect Hill.

It was a wild, raw, gusty day, and though Norah walked fast, she could not keep herself warm. Her bare hands were smarting with the cold, for she had thought it mockery to go to ask for work with gloves on. Body and soul alike were chilled, and never in all her life had Norah felt so thoroughly out of heart as she did that

January afternoon. Her senses seemed to be locked up, and when some one approached her and said, "Good afternoon," she responded mechanically, without lifting her head, and was walking on, but that the person who had spoken blocked her way. Looking up she saw Mr. Newton standing in front of her, his grey eyes searching her face.





CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Newton's Story.

“**E**XCUSE me,” he said pleasantly, “but what line of thought have you fallen into that has caused such a look of abstraction to your face?”

Norah pressed her hand to her forehead, a habit she had when she wanted to recall anything, or to quicken her brain. “I don’t know. I have been thinking of so many things, that I scarcely know what I have been thinking about,” she answered dreamily.

“I am afraid they were not pleasant thoughts, for you look really miserable. Is Flipsy worse to-day?” he asked kindly.

“No, she is rather better, thank you.”

“But *you* do not look well. I have noticed it for a long time. You are so thin and pale. You ought not to be out this cold day. Is it anything I could fetch for you? If so, I will gladly do it; and you can run back home.”

“Thank you; it is nothing that you can do. I must do it myself,” said Norah, the large tears

gathering in her dark eyes, and splashing down on her cold hands.

The kind words, spoken in such gentle tones, and coming after the unpleasantness with her step-mother, quite unnerved her ; and turning away to hide her face, she was rushing on, when her hands were taken in a warm clasp, and she was held tightly. Something in the touch of those soft, warm hands soothed her ; and shaking off the tear-drops from her long lashes, she said :

“Forgive me for being such a baby, Mr. Newton. It is not often that I am so weak.”

“Won’t you tell me what it is that is troubling you, Norah ? and why you are obliged to be out this cold day ? I do not ask merely out of curiosity ; for if you will believe me you have no sincerer friend, even though my conduct towards you may have implied otherwise.”

Norah was silent. Had he asked the question in a mocking tone, she would have told him the truth, and would have felt a kind of savage pleasure in thus humbling her pride before him. For Norah, ashamed of herself for letting her thoughts stray from her keeping, trampled on her feelings ruthlessly, and tried to uproot the love in her heart with a tyrant’s hand. But now that he had asked the question kindly, had called her “Norah,” and was looking at her as he had done that night of the concert, she felt ashamed to tell him the truth. She was afraid when she told him the errand on which she was bent, that the kind look and tones would pass away, and he would be again the icy, cynical

Mr. Newton that she had once disliked so cordially. And then thinking, "It would be better, for I am afraid I shall make a fool of myself if he looks at me much longer like this," she lifted her head, and said quietly, though a burning blush mounted to her cheeks :

"I am obliged to be out to-day, because we are poor, and I want to get work."

"But where are you going this way to get work?" asked Mr. Newton, in surprise.

"I am going over to Prospect Farm. It is the time for taking up turnips now, to plough the ground."

"But, Norah, surely there is no need for you to do that! It is not fit work for a woman; and this weather too. What can your father be thinking about?" asked Mr. Newton, in indignant tones.

"He is not to blame, Mr. Newton. He works like a slave, but the price of tin is so low, that he has only got a pound for his month's work. It cannot be helped, and surely it is better to do any honest work than to get in debt. If I keep myself honest and pure, Mr. Newton, I don't think the work I do with my hands will degrade me." There was an appealing look in Norah's eyes as she spoke, while her voice trembled slightly, and she waited eagerly for Mr. Newton's answer.

"No, no," said Mr. Newton, "I honour you for your courage, Norah; but it grieves me to know that you are obliged to do it. How can I sit in my warm room of a morning, and think of your being out in this bitterly cold weather, taking up turnips?"

Norah looked at him in astonishment, and catching the look, and seeming to remember something, he said abruptly :

“ And what is your lover about that he lets you do this, Miss Lang ? ”

Norah caught her breath, and a look of pain passed over her face. It was not so much the question, but the cold tones struck a chill to her heart after the gentle ones he had been using, and her lips quivered as she answered :

“ He doesn't know anything about it, Mr. Newton, for I have not heard from him for two years. Sometimes I think that he is dead.”

“ Forgive me,” said Mr. Newton, a smile breaking over his face, “ I did not know that. If I had I might have acted differently. Norah, will you forgive me for the unkind way in which I have treated you ? ”

“ I have nothing to forgive. You had a right to act as you liked, Mr. Newton.”

“ No, don't speak like that, just as if you did not care whether I spoke to you or not. Say you will forgive me, Norah, and will take me for your friend.” And Mr. Newton looked smilingly down into Norah's eyes.

Smiling in return, Norah said : “ I will say yes to both if you like, but now I must be going. Good afternoon, Mr. Newton,” and Norah tried to withdraw her hands, but they were held fast.

“ If I am your friend, you must allow me to act a friend's part. Norah, let me lend you a few pounds, so that you need not go out in the fields to

work. You can repay me when the mine goes on."

"Thank you many times, Mr. Newton," said Norah, in a husky voice, "but I cannot accept of help from anyone," and slipping her hands from his loosened grasp, she walked on; but Mr. Newton walked at her side. After awhile he said gently:

"You are not offended with me, are you?"

"No! How could I be when you are so kind? But please leave me now, Mr. Newton, I would rather be alone."

"I will if you wish it," was the softly spoken answer; and, raising his hat, he walked away.

Norah walked fast until she turned a corner in the road, and knew that he was out of sight, and then she gave way to the feelings that were overpowering her. The tears fell in showers over her face, and sobs shook her frame, but she did not cease walking. At last the tears ceased, and Norah felt better. From one degree to another she had been wrought up to a high pitch of excitement, and the hot tears seemed to ease her burning brain. There was a warm thought at heart, too, that Mr. Newton had been kind to her, had thought of her, and cared whether she was happy or miserable. Hope came back as she remembered his words, and when in the evening she returned home, Flipsy saw that the cloud of sorrow was lifted, and she wondered what good fortune had befallen Norah, that she looked so pleased.

"Have you got work?" she whispered.

"Yes. I am to commence on Monday morning,

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and am to have work as long as there are any turnips to take up," answered Norah, with a funny little grimace.

"I hoped that you had got something else to do, you looked so joyous," said Flipsy, disappointedly. Norah did not reply, for she had much ado to keep from laughing outright, her thoughts were so pleasant.

The biting east wind continued for a whole week and as Norah stood out in the field each morning, taking up the turnips and scraping the earth from them, the wind seemed to chill the marrow in her bones. At night her legs ached so that she could not sleep, and a terrible cough was racking her frame. Each day she fought against pain and weakness, but at the end of the week she was obliged to give in; and for a fortnight had to lie in bed and listen to Mrs. Lang's moans and sighs at having two sick people to wait upon. But spite of all, she was really kind to Norah, now that she was so ill. She could not turn in bed without pain.

At the end of a month, Norah was downstairs again, but not able to work. The doctor had said that she must not think of working for another month, and Norah could not help fretting as she thought how poor they really were. She was sitting by the fire alone one evening, Flipsy being more tired than usual had gone to bed early, and as she gazed thoughtfully into the fire, she was trying to plan out some line of action for the future, when her thoughts were interrupted by a knock at the door. Thinking it was one of the neighbours,

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she raised her voice, and said, "Come in," when, to her surprise, the door opened, and in walked Mr. Newton. He looked pleased as he shook hands with Norah, and said,

"I am very glad to see you downstairs again. How do you find yourself?"

"I am nearly well again now, thank you," said Norah.

"I have called to ask for you several times. I saw Mrs. Lang just now, and she told me that you were able to get down again. Where is Flipsy, I don't see her?" said Mr. Newton, as he glanced at the empty sofa.

"She is not so well to-day, and has gone to bed early. She is very delicate, poor child. It grieves me to see how little she eats," said Norah, sighing.

Mr. Newton was silent for some time, and sat looking into the fire, thoughtfully stroking his face. At last he fixed his piercing gaze on Norah, and said abruptly,

"Norah, would you mind telling me under what conditions you became engaged to Captain Phil Trevathen?"

The ready colour suffused Norah's cheeks, and, with a distressed look on her face, she said anxiously; "I would rather not tell you, Mr. Newton: the knowledge would be of no interest to you, while it would give me pain to tell it."

"I don't wish to pain you, Norah, but as I too have suffered, more than you will ever guess, from hearing a part of the story, I feel I have a right to know the rest. Will you tell me, Norah?"

Mr. Newton was not the man whom one could deny a request very easily. And as Norah looked up at his calm, clear cut features, high forehead, and dark piercing grey eyes, she felt that behind all this lay a will stronger even than her own; and yielding to it quietly, she told him in a low voice, why she had promised to be Phil Trevathen's wife.

"You say that you did not love him at first, but hoped to after a time. Did you learn to love him, Norah? Do you love him now?" asked Mr. Newton, softly.

Norah turned her eyes away, hesitated, and then looked again at Mr. Newton, and then she burst out excitedly, as if not able to help it: "No, I never loved him, and I do not love him now. Oh! I wish you had not asked me."

"Why, Norah?"

"Because he was so kind to me, and he loved me as no one else ever will. And now I have no right to tell you all this, but you made me," said Norah, excitedly. And then as she looked at Mr. Newton, who was regarding her with a compassionate smile on his face, she burst out again passionately:

"I know why you have done it. You want to laugh at me, and be able to say that you can make the girls tell you everything. I have heard you sneer at the 'ladies,' as you sarcastically put it, but I have always wondered why you took the trouble to act two different parts with me. Surely a poor mine girl was not worth such elaborate trouble. You asked me to forgive you the other day, but

you never told me why it was you treated me as a friend and an equal at one time, and at another as if I were lower than the dust on the road. Say! why have you done this? And why have you made me tell you all my story to-night?"

"Hush, my poor child, you ought not to excite yourself so," said Mr. Newton, gently; "I am not such a mean fellow as you give me credit for. I will explain to you why my conduct has been so erratic directly, but first, look at me, Norah, and tell me if you cannot trust me, and believe that I am your friend."

Norah looked up into his face, and as she met his clear, honest gaze, she heaved a sigh of relief and said softly: "I can trust you, Mr. Newton."

"That is right. Now I will tell you my story."

Then followed the story which the reader already knows. As Norah listened to it, she freely forgave him for all the pain he had caused her. She learnt now for the first time the reason of that sudden change in his manner towards her. In speaking of it, Mr. Newton said:

"It was torture to me to act in that cold manner with you, Norah. Torture also to hear Flipsy tell how you had sacrificed yourself for her. I found that you were all I had imagined you to be; and when I thought what a faithful wife you would be to the man who had won your love, I hated Phil Treva-then as much as I had hated Nellie. And then came the news that I was free; and I began to wonder if you were really engaged to Captain Phil; and when Flipsy told me he had been gone

more than five years, I began to hope that it was broken off.

"I would have been kind to you then, but you always shunned me. I could see you had something on your mind, for you always looked so anxious and careworn. After I saw you on Prospect Hill, and found that you did not hear from Phil Trevathen, I made up my mind to ask you a question, Norah!"

Norah lifted her crimson face from her hands, and looked at Mr. Newton, who had risen from his chair. His quiet face was lit up as she had never seen it before, and stretching out his hands, he said softly:

"There is no need for me to tell you that I love you, I have told you that already. What I want to know now is, whether you love *me*."

"Love you!" echoed Norah, taking one of his hands and laying her cheek in the palm, "God alone knows how much I do love you."

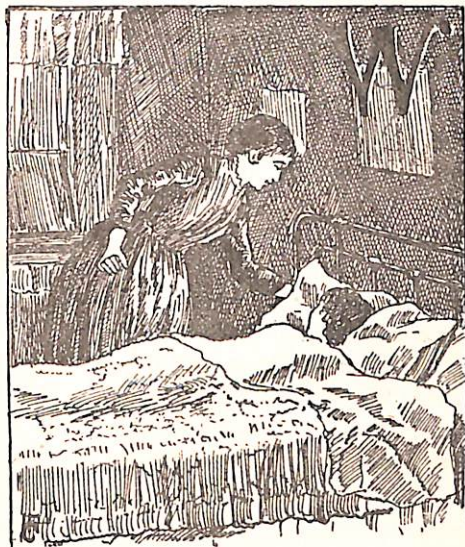
Mr. Newton was answered, and lifting her face with the hand she held, on a level with his own, he pressed a kiss on her warm red lips, and then murmured softly: "As I loved—loved am I."

Norah forgot Phil Trevathen, forgot everything but that Mr. Newton loved her, when she was startled by hearing a noise, as of some one falling on the floor above.



CHAPTER IX.

Disappointment.



WITH a quick, "What is that?" Norah left Mr. Newton's side, and sprang up the stairs. As she entered her bedroom, the first sight that met her eyes in the dim candle

light, was a little heap of white drapery on the floor. Snatching the candle from the table, she held it down, and saw that it was Flipsy, whose face was as white as the nightdress she wore. Repressing the scream that sprang to her lips, Norah lifted the little form, and laid it on the bed. After she had sprinkled some water on her face, and rubbed her hands, Flipsy's eyes slowly unclosed ;

but when she saw who it was bending over her, she shivered violently and closed them again.

"What is the matter, Flipsy? How did you come to faint?" asked Norah, anxiously, still rubbing the cold, clammy hands.

Flipsy looked up at Norah, with a wild startled look, but did not speak.

"Flipsy, my dear child, what is the matter? Why do you look at me like that?" asked Norah excitedly.

"Did I look funny?" asked Flipsy, like one in a dream. And then burying her face in the bed-clothes, she sobbed aloud.

"Oh, what can I do?" said Norah, in tones of distress. And then clasping her arms around the little shaking form she said, soothingly, "There, dear, stop crying now. You will be better directly. You got nervous, I expect, up here all alone. I will wrap you up in this big shawl, and carry you down by the fire."

Five minutes later, Flipsy was lying on the sofa, in front of the fire, with Norah bending anxiously over her, and Mr. Newton on his knees by her side, gently chafing her thin hands. Flipsy wished he would leave; for she felt if he stayed and looked at her much longer, she would go mad, and perhaps shriek out her secret to them. Then she heard Mrs. Lang's footsteps, and for the first time in her life, Flipsy felt thankful for her step-mother's presence.

While Mrs. Lang was asking, and Norah and Mr. Newton were answering, questions, Flipsy felt that

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their eyes were turned from her, and closing her own, she tried to think. But all that she seemed able to do was to pray fervently that God would help her to keep her secret. The surety of knowing there was someone who could help her, steadied her nerves ; and to her stepmother's question as to what ailed her, she answered :

"I had a bad dream, and then I got out of bed, and fell along faint. That is all. I am better now, and quite warm. I will go to bed again soon, and sleep, and by the morning I shall be better."

"What a nervous little thing, to be afraid of a dream," said Mr. Newton, playfully. "But it is time I was leaving. Good night, Mrs. Lang. Good night, little Flipsy. I shall call in to-morrow to see that you *are* better."

Mrs. Lang stepped into the pantry, and while she was there, Flipsy heard soft whispers at the door. Smothering a groan, she pulled the shawl that she wore up around her face, so as to partly hide it. A fresh pang of pain tore her heart, when Norah stepped back into the room, her face radiant with happiness, a striking contrast to Flipsy's white, pained face.

If love is blind, happiness is certainly indifferent to misery, in many cases. Norah was so much engaged in thinking of her own happiness, that she failed to notice how Flipsy's pale features sharpened in the weeks that followed ; and once when Mr. Newton remarked how quiet Flipsy had grown, Norah answered :

"She is thinking over a new story, I expect.



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She is generally quiet when she has a story in hand. The clever little mouse."

With her kind, overworked father Flipsy always strove to be cheerful. When her health had improved, and she had the hope of one day being an authoress, quiet Flipsy had developed a talent for originality ; and was much given to making little witty speeches, which greatly amused her father. He liked also to draw her into an argument, for she had never any fear of him, and stated her opinions on subjects (adverse to his though they often were) with the most perfect freedom. But now, instead of opposing him, she assented to all he said ; until one evening he burst out laughing and said :

"Whatever has come over you, Flipsy? No matter how pronounced I am in my opinions, you let me have my own way instead of arguing fiercely as is your wont ;" and then he added anxiously : "Aren't you well, Flipsy? You always look pale ; but somehow your face seems thinner now than it used to be."

Flipsy smiled, and said saucily : "No wonder that I am thin. Only think what agonies I must have suffered to let you have your own way as I have done. See how amiable I have been. And after all my efforts to be good, you don't seem to appreciate them."

"That's so, for you see if you *won't* fight, I *can't*. Norah, what is the matter with this child? I see *she* won't tell me."

"She hasn't told me either ; but I believe she

is busy thinking up a new story, and that is the reason of her being so silent and absent-minded," answered Norah, smiling.

"That the reason for all her boasted goodness, is it? And what is your new story to be about, Flipsy?"

"You should not be so inquisitive, father. You know you always insist that inquisitiveness belongs exclusively to the *weaker* sex. Now then, if that is so, how is it that you are trespassing on their ground?" asked Flipsy, with a quick, bright glance at her father.

"Can't I feel a friendly interest in you without being called inquisitive, Miss Flipsy?" asked William, trying to look grave, but feeling secretly glad to see her so cheerful and bright again.

"Trespassing again, Sir. Don't you know that only women have the right to answer one question by asking another? That's another proof of your weakness, Sir."

"And of yours too," said William laughing "I never knew you own up to so many failings before."

" ' Poor women have many faults,
Men have only two :
There's nothing right they say,
And nothing right they do,' "

quoted Flipsy, demurely.

" ' But if naughty men do nothing right,
And never say what's true ;
What precious fools the women are,
To love them as they do,' "

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quoted another voice from the doorway, the sound of which dyed Norah's cheeks a rich crimson, but drove the tinge of pink, which her banter with her father had called up, from Flipsy's face, making her look more wan and pale than before.

"You should always give your enemies fair play, Miss Flipsy, and always give the whole of a quotation," said Mr. Newton, as he shook hands with her.

"Don't ever expect fair play from a woman, for if you do you won't get it," said William, with a side glance at Flipsy.

"Two men against one woman in an argument is your idea of fair play, I suppose," said Flipsy, quickly.

"She's got you now, Mr. Lang," said Mr. Newton, and then casting a keen glance at Flipsy, he said banteringly, "But what have the men done so very dreadful to call forth your displeasure, Miss Flipsy? You are too much of a child to have ever had a love affair, or I should say some one had been making love to you, and had deserted you for another fair one."

"You are about right, when you say I am too young to have a love affair, Mr. Newton," said Flipsy, looking up defiantly into his face, and smiling brightly. But a close observer would have seen how her eyes glittered, and the hands which she had clasped together were shaking like aspen leaves. Poor little Flipsy! She was learning her first lesson in deception, and it cost her dear. But she cared not what pain it cost her, so long as her



secret was safe, and still smiling she said : " Getting in love is too commonplace a thing for me, Mr. Newton ; everyone does that nowadays. How many times have you been in love ? "

This was turning the tables on Mr. Newton with a vengeance, and William could not help laughing aloud as he saw how embarrassed he looked.

" You should not make such personal remarks, Flipsy," said Norah, reprovingly.

" No interested person allowed to interfere in this discussion," said Flipsy, a little maliciously.

William fairly roared, and joining in the laugh Mr. Newton said : " Why, Flipsy, you hit right and left. I didn't know that you could be so fierce. It is another proof that we ought never to trust to appearances."

" Just so," said Flipsy, composedly ; " but as your remark will apply to both sexes, there is no need for me to get up a defence. My head is aching too, suppose we have some music for a change. Norah, give us, ' We parted by the river side.' I haven't heard you sing it since Captain Phil went away. I daresay you can sing it *now*. Or perhaps Mr. Newton will sing it ? "

And Flipsy, looking very innocently at each of them in turn, saw how Norah started, and blushed ; saw also the frown on Mr. Newton's brow, and the savage way in which he bit his under lip, as she emphasised the word " now." And then, as Norah walked towards the parlour, followed by Mr. Newton, Flipsy thought sadly :

" Oh dear, how cross and hateful I am. But I

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can't help it. Why need Norah have made him love her. She has health and beauty, and I have neither. She had Phil, who fairly worshipped her, and why need she want anyone else? I've not been like myself to day, I know, for I am generally careful not to hurt people's feelings; but in trying to deceive them I have vexed them both I reckon; and somehow I feel glad of it. Why should I bear all the pain, and they have all happiness?" And stifling a sob that rose to her lips, Flipsy clasped her hands over her eyes, and tried to listen to Mr. Newton and Norah's singing. But instead of soothing her it tore her heart afresh, and she thought bitterly: "I wish he would go away, or that I could, so that I might never see him."

She little thought how soon her wish would be realised. For more than a month Flipsy had been anxiously expecting an answer from the editor, to whom she had sent her first long story, to say whether he would accept it or not. Each day she insisted on rising early; and seated on the sofa near the window, she watched anxiously for the postman, and when she saw him pass by, and knew that there was no letter for her, she would lie back on the sofa with a look of terrible misery on her face. Each morning, before the postman passed, she would be in a state of hope and excitement, but when he passed without calling, the worry and disappointment would bring on a racking headache, which held her all day.

Little by little excitement and misery was telling on her delicate frame. On the morning

after her talk with Mr. Newton, the long-expected letter came. Flipsy's heart beat fast, and spots of excitement burned on her cheeks, but they soon died away as she read the letter. The wording of it was polite, and even kind, but it told her that her story was not suitable for their magazine, and her MS. would be returned. Flipsy said nothing to anyone, but when she received the MS. next morning, she locked it up in her box, and five minutes later Norah found her lying on the sofa, white and motionless.

After that she no longer insisted on rising early in the morning ; and some days she was too weak and ill to get downstairs at all. The doctor who came to see her said that medicine would do no good ; that she needed rousing, and that as soon as the weather became a little warmer she must go away for change of air.

It was a still, gloomy afternoon in April, and Flipsy's thoughts, as she lay on the bed gazing out of the window at the heavy, shower laden sky, were in unison with the weather. She was alone, for Norah was working at the mine. The St. George, having been started afresh, most of the " old hands " had been taken " on " again. Mrs. Lang had gone to market, and Flipsy was just wishing that someone would come in to dispel her gloomy thoughts, when Miss Lillie's sweet face peeped in at the door. She had been away from home for a month, and her first words as she caught sight of Flipsy were :

" Why, Flipsy, have you been very ill ? What is the matter ? "

“Not much the matter, Miss Lillie,” answered Flipsy, with a wan smile. “I’ve felt weak and done up lately, and I get a lot of headache.”

“You look as if you had been ill for months. I expect you have been worrying about your story. Have you heard anything yet?” asked Miss Lillie.

“Yes, I have heard,” answered Flipsy, quietly.

“And they have——”

“Refused it,” said Flipsy.

“Oh, I am so sorry,” said Miss Lillie, compassionately. “But you ought not to take it to heart so. Why not try another editor?”

“No, I have given up all thoughts of it, Miss Lillie. I have locked all my papers away and said good-bye to them.”

“But, Flipsy, you ought not to grow discouraged so quickly. It is a poor soldier who will give in at the first prick of the sword.”

“But if that soldier has no interest in the issue of the battle, if he is sure that though he should fight well, and be promoted, that there is nothing but misery for him at the end, what then, Miss Lillie?” asked Flipsy, wearily.

“There will be the satisfaction of knowing that he has done his duty. Pluck up courage; try another story, Flipsy. Leave this one alone, and commence a new one. Try a simpler story, something for children again. You have talent, I know, and every story you write gains you fresh experience. The time is not lost. Take my advice and try again.”

“It is useless,” said Flipsy, listlessly. “I haven’t

the strength for a new one. If I forced myself to do it, anything I could write now would be as weak as dishwater. Besides, why should I? I shan't be here long, and the only comfort I have is to lie here and do nothing. I am so tired, Miss Lillie Tired of everything. I shall be glad to die."

"Why, Flipsy, my poor child, you pain me," said Miss Lillie, with tears in her eyes. "It is not right for you to talk like this. God did not give you your life to throw away. He will be angry with you, Flipsy."

"Do you think He cares, Miss Lillie?"

"Cares! Why, Flipsy, you are ungrateful to talk like that, when He has given you everything."

"And when you take the *everything* into account it is not much," said Flipsy, the light in her eyes kindling. "He gave me life it is true, and what a dreary life it has been. Until I was eighteen I knew not what it was to walk out in the open air. He gave me a puny, crippled form, and a plain, sallow face. I accepted my lot with patience, and tried by the use of the brains He had given me to be able to stand on a level with other people. I thought if I could succeed in writing something that would please the people, they would forget my ugly face and crippled form. But I have failed, and no one will ever love me now."

"Is that the reason why you worked so feverishly over this last tale? Did you wish to win some one's love, my poor child?" whispered Miss Lillie, pressing a kiss on the poor tired white face.



CHAPTER X.

Tangled Threads.

FLIPSY clasped her thin hands nervously together, and her eyelids drooped ; and then looking up into Miss Lillie's pitying face, she answered simply :

"Yes ; that is why I worked so hard.

I was so much better last summer that somehow I didn't think myself so awfully ugly, and I thought if my story was accepted, Mr. — I mean *he*, would see something perhaps to admire in it ; and would learn that I had a mind that was not deformed, and so perhaps love me. But all the time he was loving someone else. I heard him tell her so one evening. He thought of me only as a child, to be petted and made much of, forgetting that when God made this puny form, He did not forget to put a heart into it. A heart as large and as capable of loving as any one's. Ah ! if only my heart had been left out of me, I should have done very well."

"Poor Flipsy ! poor child !" said Miss Lillie, pityingly.

"I could have borne one blow patiently, but both were too much for me," continued Flipsy,

wearily. "If my story had been accepted, I would have tried to forget that I had a heart. I would have lived for fame alone ; but I have failed in both. Nothing is left me now ?"

"Flipsy, listen to me," said Miss Lillie, earnestly. "I can quite understand your feeling that God is against you, but I have a presentiment that you will one day see that all this pain has been given you for your own good. You must not give up, I will not let you. You shall come home with me, and I will drive you out every fine day ; and as soon as you get strong enough, you shall write another story. Write it out of your own sorrow, from your very heart, and what is written from the heart is sure to succeed. See Charlotte Brontë. It is not likely that she would ever have been so famous, had she not suffered a heart trouble in her youth. Out of this suffering, you may write something that will make *you* famous. Will you try, Flipsy ?"

Flipsy was silent, but Miss Lillie saw that she had struck the right chord, she had awakened Flipsy's ambition ; and following up her advantage she continued :

"This love which you feel now, is only a girlish love, Flipsy, which will quickly pass away. If you fill up your time with work, you will soon forget it. Love doesn't often live with nothing to feed on. When you grow older, you will love again, and with a more lasting, sensible love ; for you will learn to control your heart, so that you will not give it before you are asked for it."

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A flush of shame passed over Flipsy's face, and then she laughed, and said cheerfully,

"I don't think you know anything about love, Miss Lillie ; but any way, you have given me some good advice : I see now how cowardly it is to throw down my life, because some one has disappointed me. You have given me hope ; I will try again."

"That is right. You will get better now."

And she did. The next day she insisted on being taken out of bed, and the Sunday following she was brought downstairs. A week later, Miss Lillie came with a carriage and drove her back to the parsonage. It was the best thing for Flipsy, for Miss Lillie would not allow her to mope. Each day when it was fine, she took her out for a drive ; and she was always devising something to keep Flipsy's thoughts from dwelling on herself. Flipsy had mentioned no name, but Miss Lillie felt sure that Mr. Newton was the one who had won her love ; so whenever Mr. Newton called at the parsonage, she managed that Flipsy should not see him.

Flipsy had been at the parsonage a month, when Mr. Patterson came into the room where she and Miss Lillie were sitting, and said rather excitedly :

"I have just seen Mr. Newton, Lillie, and he tells me he must leave Cornwall to-morrow. He has written to a friend of his, who will take his place in the school. He hasn't given any reason, and he seems like a man half crazy. He became

more calm just as I was leaving, and told me that Miss Lang would be able to take his place as organist. I wonder what can be the matter?"

"Some one left him a fortune perhaps," said Miss Lillie, speaking lightly. And then casting a quick glance at her father, she said, "Have you seen how nicely I have arranged your study?"

"My study! I hope you have not meddled with the books," said Mr. Patterson, as he hastily left the room.

This was what Miss Lillie wanted, and turning to Flipsy, whose agitation she had noticed, she said gaily, "You and I are going out to tea this afternoon."

"Oh no, Miss Lillie, I would much rather stay at home please," said Flipsy, casting an imploring look at Miss Lillie.

"Wait till you get there," said Miss Lillie, with a smile, "you will alter your story then. It is a delightful three miles drive, and Mrs. Perry is one of the nicest old ladies I know. Her house is a perfect picture, and such a flower garden! You will be delighted when you get there; so don't raise any objections."

Flipsy was silent, but for once she wished that Miss Lillie was not so kind. She would much rather stay where there was a chance of hearing further about Mr. Newton. She had wished that she could get away where she could not see him, but now that her wish was answered, and she never saw anything of him, she longed often to be at home of an evening, that she might hear him



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speak to her. She knew it was foolish, and tried hard to conquer the feeling, and had partly succeeded. But now that she knew he was leaving Cornwall, all the old love revived. She asked leave to go home, but Miss Lillie would not hear of it, and looking at Flipsy searchingly, she said :

"Flipsy, you say no one knows your secret but me. How long do you think that would be true if you went home now? Be a woman, Flipsy. Stay here and conquer this weakness." And without waiting to see the effect of her words, Miss Lillie left the room.

These words stung Flipsy out of her weakness, and several times that afternoon Miss Lillie nodded approval at her ; for never had she seemed so witty and entertaining.

When Flipsy went home a week later, she was able to ask Norah, in perfectly natural tones, if Mr. Newton intended coming back again.

"I don't know," answered Norah, with a look of anguish on her face.

"I never heard any reason for his leaving, did he give any?" asked Flipsy.

"To me. But he never gave his real reason to anyone else. You shall read his letter, if you will promise not to tell anyone. Not even Miss Lillie."

"I promise," said Flipsy, gravely. And forcing down the choking sensation in her throat, she read Mr. Newton's letter.

"I cannot come to you, Norah, I dare not," he wrote, "for I am almost mad. I have just received a letter from Nellie. Yes, Nellie, *my wife that was*.

She was not dead as I believed, it was all a mistake. It was Nellie her little daughter that died. And William Grey, the man she left me for, is dead too ; and now Nellie has come back to London, and she has written saying she is ill, and alone, and wants me to come to her. May God pity me, and grant that I may not go mad. And now, Norah, my loved one, what shall I say to you ? What can I say ? I have no right to ask you to love me still, for though I will never again call Nellie wife, yet the law will still give her that title. Norah, I have spoken to Mr. Patterson, and I think he will give you my place as organist. They are well able to pay their organist now, and willing to do so. You can also take my music class, and with what you will get from teaching and playing, you will not need to work at the mine again. That thought comforts me. God bless you, Norah, and make you happier than Frank Newton."

Flipsy looked up at Norah with a look of wild horror in her eyes, and gasped out : "Mr. Newton married ! Norah, is it true, or was he really mad when he wrote this ?"

"It is only too true," answered Norah, with a groan. "I knew he had been married, and that she left him, but I thought she was dead."

And then Norah gave Flipsy a rapid outline of Mr. Newton's story. "And now she is come back again, thinking, no doubt, that he will receive her as before," continued Norah, her dark eyes flashing and her chest heaving with emotion, as she walked rapidly up and down the room. "One would have

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thought that she would have been glad to stay in Italy, where her story was not known. But no, as soon as the man of her choice died, she must come back to give fresh pain to the husband she so cruelly wronged. Some people seem born in the world to make misery. If I could only help him to bear it, but I can do nothing." And Norah threw herself despairingly into a chair.

Flipsy was silent, for her thoughts were in a whirl. The only thing she was distinctly conscious of, was a feeling of thankfulness that no one knew her secret but Miss Lillie. As she sat there and thought it all over, she felt ashamed of the bitter, sceptical thoughts she had harboured. Ashamed also, when she remembered how she had charged God as the author of all her misery. Now, as she looked at Norah, bowed down with a weight of sorrow and misery, and thought that this might have been her lot had she had the ruling of things, she felt humbled to the dust. A feeling of deep contrition stole into her heart, and a prayer for forgiveness ascended to her Father's throne on high.

Her life, which before had seemed hopelessly tangled, now straightened itself out, and she felt that behind all the tangles and mazes of life there was an unseen hand holding the end of all the threads, and that none would be lost.

The next day, Flipsy took up one of the threads which she had dropped in despair, and commenced working patiently at a new story. The idea had entered her head, that this story should be written as a thankoffering for the way in which she had



been led. And if in future years, she should ever be tempted to think that God was dealing hardly with her, this book would be a standing witness to the injustice of her thought. For, somehow, Flipsy felt sure that her story would one day come out in book form.

Something of her own sorrow found its way into the book, and those life touches were no doubt the secret of its success. For it was a success, and the first money that Flipsy had ever earned, was paid for the child of her brain.

Life had put on a different aspect for her, she no longer felt it to be a useless burden, but happy in her work, and having a sure hope of a better life beyond, health returned, and she was better than she had ever been before in her life. A sigh would sometimes escape her lips as she looked at Norah's thin cheeks and dark rimmed eyes, and one day she said, pityingly :

"I wish you would take some new work in hand, Norah, something that would draw your thoughts away from Mr. Newton, for I know it is of him you are thinking."

"And why shouldn't I?" asked Norah, almost fiercely. "Isn't his trial ten times harder than mine to bear, and mine seems insupportable at times?"

"You think like that now, but you will get over it in time," said Flipsy, gently. "As soon as you can accustom yourself to the thought that Mr. Newton is a married man, and as such you have no right to think of him, you will cease to mourn over you hard lot. And when Captain Phil comes home,

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you will be able to appreciate the love that has *always* been yours."

"Oh, Flipsy, you *are* cruel," moaned Norah. And then starting up, while the crimson dyed her cheeks, she said, passionately: "Do you think that mine is such a poor love as that! I tell you no. I gave my love to Mr. Newton, and with me to love once is to love for all time. Phil has not written to me for years, and if he thinks I am to be dropped and taken up again whenever he likes, he is mistaken. He told me if I heard nothing of him at the end of five years, I should be free. And I *am* free. If he should come home to-morrow, I would tell him so. No, Flipsy, mine is no fair weather love, which dies away when storms arise. But there," she added, wearily, "what is the use of my talking to you like this, you don't know anything about love."

"No, I don't think I do," said Flipsy, slowly. To herself she added mentally, "I am puzzled at myself, for as soon as Norah told me about Mr. Newton's having a wife, every particle of love (if the feeling was worthy that name) died out of my heart. I can't understand it. I must be something like George, for he has been in love about a score of times, and yet says he is heart whole." And laying her face on the sofa-pillow, Flipsy shook with suppressed laughter, as she recalled some of George's glowing accounts of "the girl I am going with now."

With Norah, time dragged heavily along. Several weeks had come and gone since Mr. Newton left, but she had heard nothing of him,

except the news that he had written to the School Board and given up his school. She had further heard that the friend who came to stay Mr. Newton's term out, had offered, and been accepted in his place. This seemed to imply that Mr. Newton had no intention of coming to St. Orme again.

"And why should he?" Norah asked herself, with a breaking heart. "I am nothing to him now. All that is left to us, is to forget each other as speedily as we can. And yet, why should I torture myself trying to forget him? I know I shall never do it. Oh, Frank, I wonder where you are now? I wonder what he is doing, and if his wife is better? Will he hate her again, as he did when she left him first? If he does, it will throw him back into his old scoffing, cynical ways again. Oh, my God, help him to forgive her."

These questions, and many more, Norah would puzzle over, until her brain reeled, and her heart grew sick at the thoughts they suggested. Each day she sent up fervent petitions to God to protect her lover. She prayed that this great sorrow might be the means of bringing him back to Jesus. That out of the furnace of affliction he might come forth like gold that is tried in the fire.

Betwixt hope and despair, Norah passed her days; doing her duty bravely, so that no one should guess how much she suffered. Norah thought (with a little gentle reproach in her heart) that Mr. Newton might have written her a line to let her know that he was living, but no line came.

London seemed to have swallowed him up, for she knew no more about him than if the grave had claimed him.

When she was alone, Norah lived in the past. And often she thought of these lines :

“ Swiftly our pleasures glide away,
Our hearts recall the distant day
With many sighs ;
The moments that are speeding fast
We heed not, but the past—the past,
More highly prize.”



CHAPTER XI.

Home Again.



It was about this time that George Sharp came home. He was not expected, so there was no one at home to receive him but Flipsy, who was delighted to see him, for he seemed

to her like a big sunbeam in the house.

"Well, it's good to be home again," said George, as he lay back in Mr. Lang's chair, and stretched out his long legs. "It's six months since I was home last. Any news, Flipsy?"

"Yes. Lizzie Snow is married," said Flipsy, with a mischievous glance at George.

"Whew!" said George, with a comical look. "Here's a go. You ought to have broken the news

more gently to me, Flipsy, for if I remember rightly I used to be pretty sweet on Lizzie."

"What a memory you must have, George," said Flipsy, with a pretendedly admiring look at the figure in the elbow-chair.

"Come now, Flipsy, don't you go indulging in fun at my expense. It isn't polite you know. Besides, I have given up all that sort of thing, and am a model chap; fit for a pattern for all the youngsters."

"You don't mean it, George! How very nice of you," answered Flipsy, demurely. "What is the name of the peerless one who has worked this change on you?"

"Hang it all, Flips. Didn't I tell you I had given it all up?"

"Ever since yesterday, I suppose?"

"Yesterday! Ever since I was home last time, Miss Unbelief. The fact is, I am getting tired of shamming love, I mean to go in for it in earnest."

"And what about the example to the youngsters?"

"Why, nothing could be better. We are commanded to love one another, and that's what I mean to do. I say, Flipsy, what do you think?"

"I am sure I don't know. What did I ought to think?" asked Flipsy with a merry laugh.

"That's not the way I meant to begin at all," muttered George, ruefully. "I wanted to do the thing in real poetical style; but it's no use. I may as well blurt it out, and have it over before the others come home."


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"Have what out? Are you going to quarrel with me, or have you something to give me, that you want it over before the others come home?"

"That's it exactly," said George, delightedly. "You are a good guesser, Flipsy. For I do want to give you something, and that is myself. Will you take me, Flipsy?"

"Oh!" said Flipsy, her eyes drooping, and the colour mounting to her face, before the look in George's eyes. And then forcing a laugh she said, 'You are rather a big present, George; I hardly know what I should do with you. I am afraid you are too tall to stand on the chimney-piece for an ornament.'

"I think so too, and not quite handsome enough, eh?" said George. And then he continued earnestly, "I am not joking, Flipsy, I mean what I say. The fact is, when you were very ill that time, and mother wrote to me telling me she did not think you would live very long, I found out that I could not live without you: that I loved you better than anyone else. I had always thought that the love I felt for you was a brother's love, and yet I was always comparing other girls with you, and thinking how much more interesting you were than they; but it was only when I thought of losing you that I knew what it all meant. Ah, Flipsy, I don't think I ever prayed so earnestly for my own soul as I prayed for your recovery. Thank God my prayers were answered. Have you any love to give me in return, Flipsy?"

Flipsy looked at George's plain but good-hum-

oured features, and at his stalwart frame, and big, strong hands, and thought how safely any woman might trust herself in his care. And he had offered to take *her* in his keeping. How happy she could be with him if it were right. But was it? Flipsy thought not, as she looked at her own thin hands, and puny form, and while the tears gathered in her eyes, she answered tremulously:

"Thank you, George, for your offer; but I cannot think of accepting it."

"You love someone else, I suppose?" said George, sadly.

"No, no, George, there is no one I love better, but I am such a useless burden."

"That all?" said George joyfully. And then as he clasped his arms around her slight frame he said, "God made you, Flipsy, and I love you: so there is no need to raise any more objections."

"But—" began Flipsy.

"No more 'buts,' I won't have them," said George, silencing her with a kiss.

Flipsy said no more, but a feeling of great gladness stole into her heart; and when the others came home, and she sat quietly in her corner of the sofa, her eyes would often stray to where George sat, and as she met his loving gaze she thought: "He shall not regret his choice if I can help it. I have been much better lately, and maybe if he takes me to Plymouth, the change of air will make me strong. He will be surprised when he sees my book in print. I thank God that I am not altogether unworthy of him. And I really be-

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lieve that I have always loved him better than anyone else."

"What are you smiling at?" whispered George as he bent over her sofa in the fading light.

"I was thinking that I believe I have always loved you better than anyone else."

"Of course you have: and I have always felt the same towards you."

"But what about those other girls?" asked Flipsy, twining her fingers around the hand that clasped hers.

"Oh, hang the other girls," whispered George, laughingly.

"George, for shame!"

"I beg their pardon, but as they have most of them gone up to the *altar*, the expression you will see is not so terrible after all."

"Come, come, what are you two whispering about there in the corner?" asked William jocosely.

"Why, I said 'Hang the girls,' and Flipsy is taking me to task for it. But as they walk up to the *altar* and fit the noose around their own necks, I can't see anything so very bad in it. What do you say, father?"

"No, no, you are all right," said William, laughing. "The girls are always willing to be hanged at that altar."

"Oh, dear!" said Flipsy, meekly. "What martyrs the poor women are. They have the matrimonial noose fitted around their necks, and left there to give them a foretaste of good things to come: and then they are sentenced to penal servi-



tude for life, with a gaoler to see that they don't slip off the noose."

"A gaoler, did you say? Hear that, father?"

"Ay, ay, I hear," said William. "And I dare say she wouldn't mind having a gaoler of that sort to look after her."

"Just what I've been thinking, and she'll need some one pretty *sharp* too," said George, giving Flipsy's hand a squeeze.

"Do you think so," said Flipsy innocently. "Well, now, I think quite contrary to that; for sharp people are generally so conceited that they can't think of any one else, and I should not like that, even in a gaoler."

"Gracious!" said George, blankly. "Ain't I glad mother is getting the supper. I should think Flipsy had been living on grindstones lately, she's so cutting."

"Yes, we'll have to call her Mrs. *Sharpe* soon, I expect," said Norah with a slight smile, as she sat down at the table.

"Shall I pass the *tart* to you, Norah?" asked Flipsy, quickly.

"You'd better have some of this cold fig pudding. I want it eaten up," said Mrs. Lang, who always took things literally. "It's very good."

"What for? To settle our love?" asked George, bursting into a roar of laughter, in which all the others joined.

George stopped at home a week, and then went back to Plymouth, with the understanding, that as

soon as he had got a house ready, Flipsy was to be his wife.

Two days after George left home, Flipsy was sitting at her table, trying to write; but somehow her thoughts would not go in the direction she wanted; they were continually straying after George. At last feeling herself unable to work, she lay back in her chair and began nibbling the end of her pencil, and listening every now and then to Norah, as she gave some explanations to her pupil. For Norah had followed Mr. Newton's advice, and besides being organist at the church, she had a large number of pupils.

"Well, my dear, what are you studying? Something pleasant I should think, by the look on your face."

It was Miss Lillie who spoke. She had come in unobserved. Flipsy blushed a rosy red at Miss Lillie's questioning look, but without answering the question, she asked her to be seated.

"I cannot stay long," answered Miss Lillie, "but I've got something to tell you. My brother Percy is coming home this week (he may come to-morrow), and I hardly know how to contain my joy. He is such a dear old darling, and he has been away four years."

"How nice it will be for you to have him home again. Is he at all like you, Miss Lillie?"

"I think not. He is much darker than I am. I wonder what his friend is like?" said Miss Lillie, absently.

"His friend! Is he bringing some one with him, Miss Lillie?"

"Yes. They have lived together for two years now. He saved Percy's life once, and since then they have been like brothers."

"How did he do it? Would you mind telling me?"

"Not at all. I would like to have it written in letters of gold," said Miss Lillie, with humid eyes. 'Percy was very ill two years ago, with a malignant fever. There was great excitement at the place where he was, over a large discovery of gold at that time, and every man wanted to have a claim in the mine. It was 'every man for himself,' and Percy could get no one to nurse him for love or money; and it seemed as if he was to be left to perish, when this man (who was a perfect stranger to Percy), hearing of the illness of a young Englishman, went to him, and nursed him day and night. When Percy was nearly well, *he* was struck down with the same fever, and was brought down so low, that Percy thought he had crossed the Jordan; and that never in this world would he hear the thanks of the Englishman, for whom he had given his life. But he did not die, and that illness was made a blessing to him; for he had led a wild kind of life in California. I will read you what Percy says in this letter, 'That illness wrought much for us both, for it changed Phil into a humble Christian, and gave me the truest friend I have ever had. . . . Phil is very rich now, and is coming home with me. There is no need for me to tell you to give him a warm welcome, for I know you would welcome any friend of mine; but when you know Phil, you



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will like him for his own sake. He is very fond of singing, Lillie, so be sure and furbish up your musical and vocal powers.' Father says we are sure to like him, for we always like Percy's friends."

Flipsy was silent, for a startling idea had entered her head. Not noticing her silence, Miss Lillie continued :

"I haven't told you all yet, what I came for. I want you to come and spend Saturday afternoon with us. Father does not play croquet, so you must come to make up the right number. Besides, I want Percy to know you, for I have told him about our young authoress."

Flipsy blushed, and answered gratefully ; "Thank you, Miss Lillie, I shall be very pleased to come."

"That's right. Now good-bye until Saturday."

As soon as Miss Lillie was gone, Flipsy puzzled over the thought that had flitted across her mind while Miss Lillie was talking.

"I wonder if it is Phil Trevathen who is coming home with Miss Lillie's brother?" she mused. "Phil is just the man who would throw away his money and be gay, if he got with gay companions ; and just the one to risk his own life to save another's, and that other an Englishman, with no one to nurse him. And Phil is passionately fond of music. But there ! it may not be he, there are others that this description would fit. Anyway, I shall say nothing to Norah about my suspicions."

Saturday dawned fair and breezy, and early in the afternoon, she dressed herself carefully, and set

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out for the parsonage, which was half a mile out of the village. Flipsy had just entered the parsonage grounds (which were rather extensive and beautifully laid out), when she saw coming towards her, a tall, bronzed and bearded, fine-looking man, who looked like a foreigner. Was this Mr. Percy Patterson, or his friend?

With her heart beating fast, Flipsy walked on, and when she came close to him, she scanned his features eagerly. Seeing her, the stranger lifted his hat, stopped, and looked at her, and then, apparently satisfied, he was passing on, when Flipsy held out her hand, and said excitedly,

"Don't you know me, Captain Phil?" For it *was* Phil Trevathen.

"It cannot be possible that this is little Flipsy Lang!" exclaimed Phil, taking the little hand in his.

"Yes it is," said Flipsy, smiling up into his face.

"Miss Lillie told me that you were coming, and I came out to meet you; but I could not realise that this pretty, stylish-looking young lady, could be Flipsy."

Flipsy blushed, and said laughingly, "And if it had not been for your eyes, which are not altered, and the sight of your curly head when you lifted your hat, I should not have been sure that it was you, Captain Phil?"

"Is that so? I am very glad to see you looking so well, Flipsy. And how are Mr. and Mrs. Lang and the others?" asked Phil, hesitatingly.

"All very well thank you," answered Flipsy, quietly, turning to walk on as she spoke.

Captain Phil walked by her side in silence until they were getting near the house, and then he said:

"Miss Lillie doesn't expect you for some time yet, suppose we sit on that seat under the tree there for a few minutes; while you tell me the home news."

Flipsy walked across to the seat indicated by Phil, and sat down by his side. Captain Phil, looking very much embarrassed, said,

"Do you remember how you promised to be my friend once, Flipsy?"

"Yes, I remember it, Captain Phil."

"Then will you fulfil your promise, by answering a few questions?"

"Of course I will, Captain Phil, if I can."

"Then tell me what Norah thought, and what you thought at not hearing from me for such a long time."

"We thought sometimes that you were dead, or that the letters were missed; but that if you were *living*, you would come home sometime and explain it all."

"Then you never thought that I should be false to Norah?" asked Captain Phil, watching keenly the effect of his words.

"No, I never thought it, for you seemed to love her too well to be false to her," answered Flipsy, in a hard voice.

Silence fell between them then, and Flipsy could hear her companion's hurried breathing; see the



flush on his cheeks, and the hands playing nervously with his watch-chain ; and she wondered what explanation he would give. Would he prove false or true ?

Pushing her hat back from her forehead, for the cold breeze to blow on it, and looking away at the hills with their background of blue, Flipsy waited anxiously for Captain Phil to speak.





## CHAPTER XII.

### Flipsy Fulfils her Promise.

**I**T came at last, Captain Phil's answer. Turning to Flipsy he said, thoughtfully :  
“ You say you thought I loved Norah too well to be false to her, Flipsy ; and so I did love her. When I left home, and for two years after, I loved Norah as fond and true as a woman could be loved ; but I also loved strong drink, Flipsy, and in that Norah had a powerful rival. Never marry a man who loves strong drink, Flipsy, for it is so powerful that it comes before wife, children, or home. It deadens a man's conscience and brings to the surface all that is evil in him. Thank God, I have no love for it now, and can pass it as calmly as I can any other poison. But to my story. I think it was the growing conviction that I had never won Norah's love, which killed my love for her at last. When I had been away three years and had nothing to keep her in my remembrance but her letters, which were anything but lover-like, I grew indifferent, and her image faded from my mind. I had no thought of

slighting her, but I fell in with gay company at San Francisco, and I was wild and careless, and when I left and went to another place, and her letters never came to me, I thought she had given me up. That is how it came about, Flipsy."

"I am very sorry to hear your story, Captain Phil," said Flipsy, gravely. "But I do not blame you altogether, for there is reason in what you say. Have you not something more to tell me? Something better about yourself, I hope."

"Thank you, Flipsy. I think I have," said Captain Phil, a smile lighting up his handsome face. "God saw fit while I was in California to lay me low with sickness, and I had plenty of time to meditate. It was when I was getting better, and was feeling thoroughly ashamed, and repentant for my past follies, that Percy read to me his sister's letter. In it was a paragraph thanking me in glowing terms for the kindness I had shown her brother. She wrote as if I were a hero, and I could only wish that I was worthy of the praise she showered on me. He used often to read me her letters, until I seemed to know her, and I was always trying to be what I thought she fancied me to be."

"I don't know if I can call myself a Christian, Flipsy, but I feel a peace in my soul that I never used to feel."

"I am very glad for you, Captain Phil," said Flipsy, with shining eyes, "and I am sure Norah will be glad, too, when she hears of it."

A look of sadness and perplexity passed over



Phil's face, and turning it away from Flipsy, he said :

"Do you think she will care?"

"Of course she will care. Why shouldn't she?"

"Yes, she will care, because she is a Christian. But—but—I hope she hasn't learnt to love me since I've been gone."

"She has certainly had no inducement to," said Flipsy, dryly.

"Don't despise me, Flipsy, but I love someone else. I have not come back loving Norah as when I left. I had hoped that she would have been married or engaged to someone, before I came home. But I hear that she is still single?" this in a slightly questioning tone.

"Yes, that is true."

"Then there is but one course open for me," said Phil, agitatedly. "I will be honourable, and fulfil my promises to her. God knows I made enough of them. I will try to be a good husband, and she need never know that I have ceased to love her."

"What a martyr you would make of yourself, Captain Phil," said Flipsy, a little sarcastically.

"It ought not to be a trial to marry such a charming girl as Norah used to be," said Phil, with an effort at cheerfulness.

"There is no need for you to sacrifice yourself, Captain Phil. Norah is too proud a girl to let you do that. She would rather die of a broken heart, if there was no other way out of it." There was a

mischievous gleam in Flipsy's eyes, but Phil did not notice it, and he said earnestly :

"But she must not know it, Flipsy."

"And I say she must, for it would be doing her a cruel wrong to marry her, when your heart was given to another," and Flipsy looked at Phil severely.

"Yes, but what can I do? If she considers herself engaged to me, that is the only honourable course," said Phil, hotly.

"Well, have your own way. When must I buy a new dress for the wedding?" asked Flipsy teasingly.

Phil's countenance fell, and he sighed heavily. Hearing the sigh, Flipsy's heart smote her, and she said kindly : "There, I won't punish you any longer. I thought you deserved a little, but it will be all right when I tell you the unflattering truth. The fact is, Norah does not love you, and never has; and she has considered herself free long since. In fact she loves someone else."

"Does she?" said Phil, joyfully. "Are you sure, Flipsy?"

"Ask her," said Flipsy, laughing heartily. And then, as they saw Miss Lillie coming towards them, she said hurriedly, "Come over Monday afternoon. Father and mother are going to a school-tea. I will make it right with Norah."

"Thank you, little Flipsy; you were always my friend," whispered Phil. And then they were joined by Miss Lillie, and the conversation became general.

Captain Phil, in answer to Flipsy's invitation, called at William Lang's cottage the following Monday. He felt very nervous and excited when he saw Norah first, but she greeted him as if he were an ordinary acquaintance, and then sat sewing as quietly as if nothing out of the common were happening. Phil wished that she would speak, and he wondered how much Flipsy had told her. Thinking that they would get on better alone, Flipsy made an excuse and left the room.

When they were alone, Norah looked at Phil with shining eyes, and said :

"Flipsy has told me all, Phil, and I am so glad, I hope that you may be happier than I am," and there was a sob in her voice as she finished.

"Why, Norah, what does this mean? Has Flipsy deceived me? She told me that you would be glad, that you loved someone else. It cannot be possible that it was *me* she meant?" said Phil, ruefully, with a look of consternation on his face.

There was something so comical in the idea of Phil (who used to sue so hotly for her love) being afraid that she loved him, that Norah burst out laughing. Phil looked surprised, and rather vexed for a moment, and then as it dawned on him how unflattering to Norah his speech had been, his face was suffused with colour, and he said stammeringly :

"Forgive me, Norah. I didn't mean that I, that you,—oh, I—bother it all," muttered Phil, breaking down altogether.

"Never mind about making excuses, Phil. I



know what you mean well enough," said Norah, still laughing. And then she asked mischievously, "Do you remember telling me once that you would get money, and make me a home fit for a queen?"

"Very likely I did. But why do you ask?" asked Phil, looking very red and confused, and heartily wishing himself out of the house.

"Perhaps you have forgotten it, but I told you then, that when you had done *that*, Norah Lang, the mine girl, would be too low for your palace. I was right. A palace should have a queen, and who could grace it better than our Cornish Queen?"

Phil blushed deeper, and said: "How did you guess that, Norah?"

"With my eyes," answered Norah, laughingly. And then she added seriously, "I wish you success with your wooing, Phil, and I hope that you and I may still continue to be good friends."

"I trust so, and I see no reason why we should not," said Phil, warmly. "You have quite forgiven me, Norah?"

"I have nothing to forgive, so we will say no more about it," said Norah, as she placed her hand in Phil's broad palm, in token of friendship.

And there the engagement so strangely made was ended, and Phil was free to woo and win the Cornish Queen.

Six months later, there was a grand wedding at St. Orme, and nearly the whole of the village turned out to see it. The gossips had been talking it over for weeks, and every detail had been rehearsed a number of times. When the ceremony

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was over, and Captain Phil and his queen had left these worthy souls stopped at the church gates to talk it over.

"Well, I always thought that Miss Lillie was cut out for a parson's wife, but I spoase she thought defferent. Anyway, she seems awfully proud of Cap'n Phil," said one of the gossips.

"She'll be much better off I expect than if she had married a parson, for they say that Cap'n Phil has made a mint of money. I reckon it's true too, for that place he's bought, with a great house on it, my man says like a mansion, must have cost him a fortune. It's a much grander place than the parsonage, so Miss Lillie has stepped up."

"Well, she's worthy of it all, and Cap'n Phil in the bargain," said a third. "But shouldn't you have thought that Norah Lang would have been some mad to lose such a catch?"

"Yes, but she didn't seem so," put in a fourth, who was famous for going in opposition to every one else, no matter what the topic might be; "and I heard one of the gentlemen say that she played the wedding march splendidly."

"Well if it had been me, I should have felt awful bad," said one of the others, with a sigh, "and she's not so very young either. Poor thing! for all she's held her head so high, she'll have to dance on a faggot of thorns, for I hear that Flipsy is to be married soon."

"Yes, so I hear. I wonder how much they have got to begin housekeeping on?" &c., &c.

Not far from Plymouth, there stands a row of

neat cottages with gardens in front. One of them we notice more particularly, because the flowers are most of them old fashioned. There are fuschias, double stocks, wallflowers, pansies, carnations, sweet williams, dahlias, and a host of others. The dew is just beginning to fall, and the air is perfumed with those flowers. In the doorway, a young woman is standing. One look at her face shows that her life is a pleasant one. Looking up the road, she breaks into a little laugh, for there, coming along with long swinging stride, and whistling a gay tune, is a tall, stalwart young fellow in working clothes, and a bag of tools on his shoulder. He opens the gate, and walks up to the little woman in the doorway, and dropping his tools catches her up in his arms, and says mischievously,

"You weren't watching for your gaoler, were you?"

"That is just what I was doing," she answers, pulling his hair; "for if the gaoler won't look after me, I must look after him."

"That's right. You'd better, for it is dangerous to let a handsome fellow like me out of your sight. And you know you always thought me handsome, Flipsy."

"Did I? I don't remember it, but if I did I've altered my opinion."

"Well, you know you accepted me as an ornament, so you must have thought me handsome."

"Not a bit of it. I took you, because you were more useful than ornamental."


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"Oh! well, that is better than a certain little woman I know, for she told me before I married her that she was useless."

"Yes, and that only shows how much more fascinating I was than you; for in spite of my having nothing to recommend me, you took me. So now having settled that, will you please put me down, gaoler, for I have been stuck up as an ornament long enough, and I want to see about your supper."

"Do you? Well, kiss your gaoler, and then you shall."

Flipsy did as she was bid, and then laying her cheek against her husband's, she said tenderly:

"Darling old George, how good you are to me. I wish every woman had as kind a gaoler as I have. And I wish so much that Norah was as happy as we are."

"Ay, so do I, little woman. And it will turn out all right in the end, see if it doesn't. And then, my dear, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that George Sharpe was a true prophet," and George nodded sagely, as he put Flipsy gently on her feet.

"Well, well," said Flipsy, lifting her eyebrows, and looking quizzically at George, "I thought I married a plain man, but instead of that he tells me he is handsome (a thing I should never have dreamed of), and a prophet! I'm afraid I'm not half as thankful as I ought to be, for such extraordinary blessings."

"I'm afraid you are not Flipsy. But then

women never are thankful for anything, unless it be for somebody with whom they can find fault," and with this parting shot, George caught up his basket of tools with a chuckle, and bolted into the back yard.

"That's not bad," said Flipsy, thinking that she ought to have the last word, even if there were no one there to hear her. "And isn't he an old darling?"

Leaving her to answer that question to her own satisfaction, we will say good-bye to this happy home, and turn again to St. Orme.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### Into the Light.



It was taken for granted, at St. Orme, that Norah Lang was to be an old maid; and they allotted out her work accordingly. For what had an old maid to do but work for the

good of others? So Norah was organist, and leader of the choir, teacher in the Sunday-school and conductor of all the concerts. Norah must superintend the decorations at the church; and no tea would have been complete without her.

Mr. Patterson, too, missing Lillie's help, called on Norah to help him. Little by little she took up Miss Lillie's round of duties, and she had scarcely



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ever any time to call her own. Sometimes she asked herself if her life was to be always thus? Always this round of duties, which grew at times to be very irksome. At such times she would grow rebellious, and resolve to throw duty to the winds. To go away somewhere and be free. To leave the choir with its weary bickerings, and falling out, and never ending rounds of practising; to leave the village with its idle gossip, which so often wounded her feelings; leave the poor people with their murmurs and complaints, and the sick with their wearisome tales of aches and pains. She longed to be away from it all. And then would come the remembrance, that wherever she went she must carry her burdened memory with her. The past, with its joys and sorrows, would come back more vividly, if she had no round of duties to dispel gloomy thoughts. Then would come a rush of tears, and a prayer for forgiveness for her wild wishes; and when the storm had passed by, Norah would go about her work with greater earnestness and vigour, and puzzle her brain to devise schemes for alleviating the distress among the poor, whose complaints were only too reasonable.

It was two years since Mr. Newton had left, and she had heard nothing of him. She was thinking of him on the morning of her birthday. She was twenty-eight, and as she stood in front of the glass, she told herself that her youth was gone; but as she looked at herself, she felt a strange feeling of gladness in her heart, that her good looks had not deserted her. She was a little paler, and thinner

than of old, but otherwise she had not altered. The shining brown hair was as luxuriant as ever, and the rows of white teeth were unimpaired. Although she told herself that she was old, that morning she felt as young as at eighteen; and she ran downstairs singing and feeling lighter-hearted than she had felt for many a long day.

Her father (who was afternoon "core") was standing in front of the small looking-glass, which was hung on a nail by the side of the wall, combing his hair. As he heard her, he turned round, and said smilingly :

"Hullo, Norah, you look as bright as a button this morning. I declare if you aren't handsomer than half the girls around, even if you are thirty."

"Now, dad, you know I'm not thirty, for I am only eight and twenty to-day. You would think yourself quite young if you weren't more than that, wouldn't you?"

"Not if I were an old maid," said William, with twinkling eyes, and trying to pull a long face. "I should give up all hopes if I were you, Norah. You'll be thirty pretty soon, and that's an awfully unlucky age for an old maid."

"How very serious you look, father," said Norah, bursting out laughing. "One would think that I was a great weight on your conscience."

"Well, it's a serious thing to think of; for old maids, like old cats, get awfully spiteful and scratchy."

"There is no need for Norah to be an old maid, if she would only be half-way polite with some of

our young men," chimed in Mrs. Lang. "I know a young farmer now, who would jump out of his shoes to get Norah. But she won't have anything to say to him. I don't know what Norah can be thinking about."

"Oh, you and father would not know what to do with yourselves if I were gone," said Norah, playfully.

"That's true enough," said Mrs. Lang, gravely, "for I'll say this of you, Norah, that a better or a kinder girl to a stepmother for the last two years never breathed. And I ain't always deserved it either. And when father was ill for such a long time, and you kept the house open, you never murmured once ; but just worked yourself to skin and bone, that father should not want for anything. I ain't ever thanked you for it, but I'll never forget it as long as I live." And there were genuine tears in Mrs. Lang's eyes, as she turned to the fire.

There was joy in Norah's heart as she sat down to breakfast that morning. She had noticed that for a long time Mrs. Lang had treated her with kindness, and never talked as if she wished her away ; but Norah had thought it was because both George and Flipsy were gone, and she the only one at home. Those few words of praise, sincerely spoken, coming from her stepmother, gave Norah more satisfaction than anything she had ever done. Apart from the words was the blessed thought that she had been able to keep down her old hot, rebellious temper ; and all the forenoon she felt like singing for joy.

In the afternoon, it being Saturday, Norah was going to the church to practice a new voluntary for the coming Sabbath. When on her way there, she called at the sexton's house for the key of the church, and was told that the boy who blew the bellows had fetched it, and also the key of the organ. Wondering a little at the boy's thoughtfulness, Norah wended her way to the church. She heard the tones of the organ just as she reached the door, and she felt a curiosity to know who it could be playing. Some master hand, she thought, as she entered the church; and, making up her mind to listen without being seen, she crept in behind a pillar. There was something familiar about the piece she was listening to, and she wondered where she had heard it before. Then the music changed, and, as the sorrowful notes floated down, the tears welled up in Norah's eyes. It was like the feeling that comes over us, at a chance word or thought, which brings back to us the remembrance of our dead.

As Norah listened, a terrible longing grew in her heart for "the touch of a vanished hand," and looking up at their one magnificently stained window, with the beautiful face of Christ, which seemed to be gazing tenderly down at her, she involuntarily stretched out her hands whispering: "Oh, my God, pity me, for my heart is broken." And then covering her face, she wept convulsively. But it was not long, for soon the notes of the organ changed again, and this time a glad, jubilant strain pealed down, and Norah listened with wonder and

delight to the joyful music. Her heart began to beat faster, and a quiver ran through her veins, and, drawing herself up, she waited expectantly for she knew not what.

Soon the music died away, and then she heard footsteps going through the porch, and thinking that whoever the organist was he had left, Norah rose with a sigh of disappointment to leave her hiding place. But she did not go; for there, standing looking at the window, was the tall slight figure of one whom Norah could have singled out in a crowd.

Sitting down again, she watched him with flushing cheeks and wildly beating heart. He stood there for some minutes, and then turned and looked towards the door as if expecting some one: and then his gaze wandered around the church. Norah held her breath, expecting every minute to meet his gaze fixed on her; but he did not look that way, and dropping his head on his chest, he was walking softly past where she sat, when thinking that he was about to leave, Norah sprang to her feet.

Mr. Newton turned swiftly, and a minute later he was seated at her side, and reading in her truthful countenance what made his face beam with joy. He knew without any words that she was still all his own; and Norah knew by the way in which his hands held hers, that no tie fettered them. Loosening one of his hands, he drew Norah's head down on his shoulder, whispering words of love in her ear.

After awhile, he told her in a low voice that

Nellie was dead. All the old, bitter hatred that used to mark his words in speaking of his wife had left him, and he spoke of her in the gentle, pitiful tones we use when we speak of the dead. No word of reproach for the misery she had caused him passed his lips; and Norah knew, although he said but little, that he had cared for her as kindly as if she had never forfeited his love. She wondered what had brought about the change in him, and, lifting her head, she searched his face with her eyes, to see if it were visible there.

A casual observer would have seen no change in Mr. Newton's face; but Norah saw that the restless gleam that used to be in his eyes had left; and instead, there was a steadfast, tranquil light in them. She saw also traces of deep suffering on his face, but when he looked at her, his smile was as bright and wholly loving as of yore.

"The two years haven't altered you much, Norah," said Mr. Newton, gazing fondly into her face. "They have added more than they have taken away. You are handsomer in my eyes now, than you were the first time I saw you. I see self-reliance and power in your face, and you look like one who has had to brave the world, and has succeeded."

"Perhaps that is because I have always had some one to take care of. It used to be Flipsy, and since then it has been the poor and sick, who are always in need of help and sympathy."

"I know it, darling. All your life you have had to care for some one. Now it shall be my life's


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duty to care for you. Did you ever have a holiday in your life, Norah?"

"One or two," said Norah, smiling.

"Well, you shall have two months of it soon. I will give you a month to wind up your parish business, and buy yourself a travelling dress, and then we will away to the hills of Scotland."

Norah's eyes sparkled, and the colour deepened on her cheeks, and drawing a deep breath, she said softly :

"I have scarcely ever seen anything in my life yet, for I never had any time, and I can hardly realise that it can be Norah Lang who is to go to Scotland. Are you sure it is me that is to go?"

"Yes, it is *you*, but not Norah Lang who is to go," said Mr. Newton, smiling.

Norah looked mystified, and, with a low happy laugh, Mr. Newton kissed her puzzled face, and said,

"It is Mrs. Newton, my wife, that I intend taking with me. Do you know who that means?"

Norah shook her head, and looking at Mr. Newton wistfully, she said : "Do you think it will ever be, Frank? I have had so much sorrow and disappointment in my lifetime, that it seems like a dream to think of Norah Lang, the mine girl, being taken around to see places, with nothing to do but enjoy herself, and be happy, just as if she were a lady. I cannot realise it."

"But I can, Norah. You have had a lot of trouble and hard work, and you have borne it bravely. Now you must take the joy that God sends you.

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He does not intend that our lives shall be always sorrowful. He gives us sunshine as well as rain. God intends you to enjoy the sunshine now, Norah, or He would not have sent it."

A great light sprang into Norah's eyes, and her cheeks paled, but she did not speak.

"Yes, darling, it is true," said Mr. Newton, reading the question in Norah's eyes. "Your God is my God now. I have not conquered all my doubts, but, 'I believe in God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only Son,' and that is enough for me. I may never rise to that eminence where doubts and fears never disturb the mind, but I cling to the belief that Jesus died for me, and the lessons He taught, while here on earth, I am trying to follow."

Silence fell between them then, and God alone knew what their thoughts were. Rising at last, Mr. Newton held out his hand to Norah, and said :

"Come, Norah, the sun is setting, and we must be going home."

Norah laid her hand in his, and looking up into the face of the man by her side, she recognised as by a flash, that here was the strength she had always coveted. The strength of a strong mind that does not shun a doubt, but looks it squarely in the face and honestly tries to get at the right of it.

When they came out of the church, Mr. Newton locked the door, and leaning against it, he looked away to where the sun was going down, leaving a great red light behind.

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"Just like that should the Christian's life be, Norah. Casting a glow of goodness and charity all around, so that others may feel it," said Mr. Newton, earnestly. And then withdrawing his gaze, and looking at the quiet figure by his side, he said softly : "You and I have both known what sorrow is, but hitherto we have been apart. Now, God sparing both our lives, we will take what life has in store for us together. Are you satisfied that it should be so, my Norah?"

"Infinitely satisfied," answered Norah, gazing up with trustful eyes into his.

"Come then." And linking her arm in his, they walked away, with the red rays of the setting sun shining on their faces, and on the path in which they were treading.

